



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

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

Pesa, I.

### **Citation**

Pesa, I. (2014, September 29). *Moving along the roadside: A social history of Mwinilunga District, 1870s-1970s*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/28744>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/28744>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/28744> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Peša, Iva

**Title:** Moving along the roadside : a social history of Mwinilunga District, 1870s-1970s

**Issue Date:** 2014-09-23

### 3B: Labour Migration

#### Work, mobility and self-realisation

Labour migration built upon and interacted with other forms of mobility in Mwinilunga District. Due to its scope, labour migration has been attributed transformative capacities in the historiographical debate.<sup>1133</sup> Whether the practice would lead to development and modernity, or to underdevelopment and rural decay, it was bound to influence the rural area of Mwinilunga profoundly. This transformative paradigm emphasises ruptures and dichotomies, between rural and urban, development and underdevelopment, or even modernity and tradition. Such dichotomies should be questioned and reassessed.<sup>1134</sup> By focusing on how labour migration emerged from the historical culture of mobility in the area, enhancing opportunities towards self-realisation, such binaries can be challenged. The effects of labour migration in Mwinilunga District will be examined, by highlighting the long-term continuities and socio-cultural dispositions behind the practice.

One of the major concerns of colonialism 'was to gain control over the movement of people', and consequently, 'the functioning (and profitability) of the colonial state relied on the migration of labour.'<sup>1135</sup> Throughout the colonial and post-colonial period control over labour and labour mobility have remained central aspects of government power and rule.<sup>1136</sup> Not only did the state need financial resources from taxation, but there were political and ideological aspects to promoting labour migration as well.<sup>1137</sup> Allegedly, Africans had a 'moral obligation' to seek paid work, which would introduce them to the 'modernising' influence of wage labour under state auspices.<sup>1138</sup> Since within Mwinilunga District money-earning opportunities remained limited, labour migration was promoted from early on.<sup>1139</sup> From the outset labour migration has been associated with issues of 'social change', either positively leading to 'development' and 'modernisation', or negatively causing 'detribalisation', 'proletarianisation' and 'rural decay'.<sup>1140</sup> Labour migration has been interpreted within 'a metanarrative of transition, in which tribal rural Africans were swiftly becoming modern, urban members of an industrial society.'<sup>1141</sup> Such views propose a stark contrast between rural and urban, and thus movement between the two spheres becomes a transformative act.<sup>1142</sup> Alternatively, can rural and urban spheres be viewed as connected or symbiotic? Could labour migration and urban residence serve to constitute and strengthen rural society?<sup>1143</sup> The rural-urban divide might have been a 'colonial invention of tradition.'<sup>1144</sup> Recent studies have shown that close ties continue to exist between rural and the urban spheres. Migrants maintain connections to their rural 'homelands', send

---

<sup>1133</sup> See: Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1134</sup> See: Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1135</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1343-4.

<sup>1136</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 60.

<sup>1137</sup> See: A. Burton, 'The eye of authority': 'Native' taxation, colonial governance and resistance in inter-war Tanganyika', *Journal of Eastern African studies* 2:1 (2008), 74-94; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 3-5; F. Cooper (ed.), *Struggle for the city: Migrant labor, capital, and the state in urban Africa* (Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi, 1983), 12.

<sup>1138</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 72.

<sup>1139</sup> See: Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1140</sup> RLI work, in particular, associated labour migration with social change. For an influential later debate see: Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; H. Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt: Another view', *Journal of Southern African studies* 19:4 (1993), 681-712; D. Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt? Interpretations and implications', *Urban studies* 42:2 (2005), 583-609.

<sup>1141</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 33.

<sup>1142</sup> For a critique of such views see: Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1143</sup> Watson, *Tribal cohesion*; J. van Velsen, 'Labour migration as a positive factor in the continuity of Tonga tribal society', in: A. Southall (ed.), *Social change in modern Africa* (London etc., 1961), 230-41.

<sup>1144</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 122.

remittances and move back and forth.<sup>1145</sup> If the emphasis is placed not so much on economic and political factors behind labour migration, but rather on socio-cultural dispositions the 'urban and rural worlds are, from the actors' perspective, not separable.'<sup>1146</sup>

'State and capital did not determine migratory movements', but rather 'migrants' own initiative' shaped practices of labour migration.<sup>1147</sup> In the area of Mwinilunga, social connectivity has underpinned mobility and movement to town has been guided by aspirations towards self-realisation. Individuals sought 'the acknowledgement, regard, and attention of other people – which was the basis of reputation and influence, and thus constitutive of social being.'<sup>1148</sup> In this connection, 'it was not only the great figures but everyone who seems to have had the possibility of authorship of something, however small', and labour migration could be a means of achieving 'reality', 'value' and 'self-realisation'.<sup>1149</sup> 'The construction of the person, the accumulation of wealth and rank, and the protection of an autonomous identity were indivisible aspects of social practice', expressed through labour migration.<sup>1150</sup> Within the context of much older aspirations towards self-realisation, workers sought to 'conquer the city and shape their own moral and social economies in this urban space', and in order to do so they tapped 'into (pre-)colonial sources and routes of rural identity-formation, thereby negotiating and reinventing the content and architecture of the (...) world in which they find themselves.'<sup>1151</sup> Movement to town was rooted in distinctly rural realities, as 'the desire to improve the conditions of life in villages frequently leads to periods of residence in town.'<sup>1152</sup> Indeed, 'the rural and the urban constitute a single social universe encompassing both rural and urban geographical spheres.'<sup>1153</sup> Labour migration from Mwinilunga District built upon and fed into a historical 'culture of mobility', which shaped responses to employment opportunities and urban residence. Through social aspirations of 'self-realisation' rural and urban areas have been linked in multiple and complex ways.<sup>1154</sup> In order to understand the origins of and the rationale behind labour migration, colonial conceptions about work, labour and discipline will first be explored.

### From 'lazy natives' to 'able-bodied men': Constructing the idea of work

At the inception of colonial rule in the area, European and African concepts of 'work' and 'labour' did not correspond.<sup>1155</sup> Colonial discourse, propounded by the state and employers, misrepresented local practices of work in an attempt to control labour, wrest hegemony and impose alternative ideological concepts.<sup>1156</sup> Yet, as has been argued for the case of Zimbabwe: 'Africans' participation in the labour market was probably neither new, nor much controlled by the small, newly-established administration.'<sup>1157</sup> Throughout the pre-colonial period people in the area of Mwinilunga had been engaged in various forms of labour, employment and long-distance migration in search of economic

---

<sup>1145</sup> See: P. Geschiere and J. Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection: Changing issues of belonging and identification', *Africa* 68:3 (1998), 309-19; For practical examples from Zambia, see: Crehan, *The fractured community*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Pottier, *Migrants no more*.

<sup>1146</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 83.

<sup>1147</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 386-7.

<sup>1148</sup> Barber, 'Money, self-realization and the person', 216.

<sup>1149</sup> Guyer, 'Wealth in people', 255.

<sup>1150</sup> J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant: Work and labor in the historical consciousness of a South African people', *American ethnologist* 14:2 (1987), 198.

<sup>1151</sup> De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

<sup>1152</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 137.

<sup>1153</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 84.

<sup>1154</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1155</sup> Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant'.

<sup>1156</sup> Cooper, *Struggle for the city*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1157</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 123.

opportunities. The village population could be called upon by the chief to perform communal labour in his garden, hunters might go afar in search of wildlife, or individuals would engage themselves as porters with long-distance trade caravans.<sup>1158</sup> Essentially, all these might be seen as examples of ‘an indigenous form of labor organization representing a fully fledged *African* response to the world economic system.’<sup>1159</sup> Nevertheless, colonial administrators misunderstood, or rather chose to disregard, such indigenous forms of work. Local patterns of work adhered to the rhythms of the sun and the seasons, alternating spurts of intense activity with spells of leisure. Consequently, European missionaries and administrators, who came equipped with different notions of time and work, generally denounced established habits as ‘idle’.<sup>1160</sup> The Lunda were designated as ‘lazy’, undisciplined and generally antagonistic to work:<sup>1161</sup>

No demand has ever been made upon them by Europeans to work and, as they have managed to exist so long without having to do so, they are naturally adverse to commencing now (...) They will desert from work apparently almost involuntary, for they can never give a reason except that “their hearts became afraid”.<sup>1162</sup>

How did such discourses become established, and how did they build upon established patterns of work and mobility?

The idea of labour was redefined under colonial rule in an attempt to gain authority and control over the population. The administration sought to regulate existing notions of time, rules of discipline, ideas of contract and rates of pay. Preferably, however, officials sought to impose a wholly new concept of labour, one that was attuned to the European work ethic and the system of capitalism which they wished to promote.<sup>1163</sup> Officials and employers sought ‘not merely the mobilization of labor power, but the control of human beings, of people living in societies and immersed in cultures.’<sup>1164</sup> And exactly these social and cultural organisations enabled individuals to challenge and subvert colonial intentions. Individuals continued to shape their lives according to their own insights, based on historical precedents and concepts of work.<sup>1165</sup> An insight into this process of negotiation can be gained by looking at the introduction of taxation. Taxation and labour, both of which were central to colonial interests, were closely interrelated.<sup>1166</sup> The example of taxation can illustrate how the idea of labour was constructed, contested and locally adapted in such a way that existing and accepted forms of work and discipline retained prominence. The outcome of negotiations between the colonial state and local society was not a simple imposition of European ideas, but rather the fusion of local customs, aspirations and morals into a hybrid work ethic.<sup>1167</sup> By choosing their own place of employment, through desertion or tax evasion, individuals could retain considerable leverage vis-à-vis employers

---

<sup>1158</sup> Von Oppen, *Terms of trade*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1159</sup> S.J. Rockel, *Carriers of culture: Labor on the road in nineteenth-century East Africa* (Portsmouth, 2006), 7.

<sup>1160</sup> C. Luchembe, ‘Ethnic stereotypes, violence and labour in early colonial Zambia, 1889-1924’, in: S.N. Chipungu (ed.), *Guardians in their time: Experiences of Zambians under colonial rule 1890-1964* (London etc., 1992), 30-49.

<sup>1161</sup> See also: Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*; J.C. Mitchell and A.L. Epstein, ‘Occupational prestige and social status among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia’, *Africa* 29:1 (1959), 22-40.

<sup>1162</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/1, C.S. Bellis, Annual Report Balunda District, 1910.

<sup>1163</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 38-40; K.E. Atkins, ‘Kafir time’: Preindustrial temporal concepts and labour discipline in nineteenth-century colonial Natal’, *Journal of African history* 29:2 (1988), 229-44; J. Higginson, ‘Disputing the machines: Scientific management and the transformation of the work routine at the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, 1918-1930’, *African economic history* 17 (1988), 1-21; Rockel, *Carriers of culture*; Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 18-23.

<sup>1164</sup> Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 8.

<sup>1165</sup> Allina-Pisano, ‘Borderlands, boundaries, and contours’; Andersson, ‘Informal moves’.

<sup>1166</sup> See especially: Burton, ‘The eye of authority’; B. Bush and J. Maltby, ‘Taxation in West Africa: Transforming the colonial subject into the “governable person”’, *Critical perspectives on accounting* 15 (2004), 5-34; M.W. Tuck, ‘“The rupee disease”: Taxation, authority, and social conditions in early colonial Uganda’, *International journal of African historical studies* 39:2 (2006), 221-45.

<sup>1167</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 42-3; Rockel, *Carriers of culture*; But also: E.P. Thompson, ‘The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century’, *Past and present* 50 (1971), 76-136.

and the colonial state.<sup>1168</sup> This resulted in a pattern of work which was different from, yet ultimately compatible with, existing strategies of livelihood procurement. Local custom and a flexible tradition negotiated responses to taxation and regimes of labour. Such historical precedents shaped patterns of labour migration, which 'emerged from within the context of local custom and practice.'<sup>1169</sup>

#### *Taxation, tax evasion and the control of labour*

Colonial attempts at labour control and revenue creation were effected through taxation. One of the driving forces behind British imperialism was a quest for material gain and profit, especially through the exploitation of mineral resources and cash crop farming.<sup>1170</sup> Northern Rhodesia, before the development of the copper mines in the late 1920s, seemed to hold little promise for either of these, and consequently came to be regarded primarily as a 'labour reserve'.<sup>1171</sup> The chief asset of the territory, so administrators argued, was human labour. This labour might be profitably exported to the farms and mines in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa or Congo, which had started operations towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>1172</sup> Mwinilunga District seemed particularly remote and unattractive, as the area held promise of neither mining nor large-scale agricultural development, and was connected to the rest of the territory by long and poor transport hauls.<sup>1173</sup> Although labour was central to colonial aims, it did not prove readily forthcoming. Prospects of creating a reliable and profitable labour force appeared gloomy, resulting in negative stereotypes:

The Balunda will not work. Porterage is the only work they have yet been called upon to perform, and as carriers they are most unwilling and dangerous, as no Kalunda will hesitate to drop his load, and abandon it to fate while he moves off to safety with distant friends.<sup>1174</sup>

The dearth of voluntary labour, irregular work habits, high levels of desertion and protest greatly hampered colonial attempts to impose authority and control, jeopardising the profitability of administrative presence in the area.<sup>1175</sup> Individuals maintained a degree of independence in their participation in the labour market, as 'colonial state policy was unable to channel the movement of local African labourers',<sup>1176</sup> whilst 'control over African labor remained firmly in African hands.'<sup>1177</sup>

The system of taxation was introduced by the colonial state in an attempt to stimulate the provision of labour. Taxation served the dual purpose of raising administrative revenue and creating governable, disciplined African subjects.<sup>1178</sup> Allegedly, the necessity to pay taxes would propel

---

<sup>1168</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1169</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 17.

<sup>1170</sup> L.H. Gann, *The birth of a plural society: The development of Northern Rhodesia under the British South Africa Company, 1894-1914* (Manchester, 1958), 76, 113; R.S. Hall, *Zambia* (London, 1965), 87; R.P. Lander, 'The British South Africa Company: An essay on its commercial history', *Heritage of Zimbabwe* 11 (1992), 1-3; B.J. Phiri, *A political history of Zambia: From colonial rule to the Third Republic, 1890-2001* (Trenton etc., 2006), 11; P. Slinn, 'Commercial concessions and politics during the colonial period: The role of the British South Africa Company in Northern Rhodesia 1890-1964', *African affairs* 70:281 (1971), 365-84.

<sup>1171</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; H. Heisler, *Urbanisation and the government of migration: The inter-relation of urban and rural life in Zambia* (London, 1974); Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'.

<sup>1172</sup> For examples see: Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; C. von Onselen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933* (London, 1976); J-L. Vellut, 'Mining in the Belgian Congo', in: D. Birmingham and P.M. Martin (eds.), *History of Central Africa* (London, 1983), 126-62.

<sup>1173</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Slinn, 'Commercial concessions and politics', 366.

<sup>1174</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/1, G.A. McGregor, Annual Report Balunda District, 1908-09.

<sup>1175</sup> See: Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1176</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 127.

<sup>1177</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 65.

<sup>1178</sup> Burton, 'The eye of authority'; Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa'; Tuck, 'The rupee disease'.

individuals to engage in the capitalist monetary economy, either by selling cash crops or by engaging in waged labour. Taxation, thus, was meant to encourage 'industry' over 'indolence':<sup>1179</sup>

The main object of the tax originally, was to raise revenue for the purpose of covering at least a proportion of the expenses connected with native administration. It may have had other objects, such as providing a method whereby some control could be exercised over the natives and it may also have had the object of providing an incentive which would encourage or force a naturally indolent native population to turn out to work.<sup>1180</sup>

Nevertheless, indigenous patterns of work were asserted in opposition to colonial concepts of waged labour and the capitalist work ethic.<sup>1181</sup> Subverting colonial intentions, the population of Mwinilunga District vehemently resisted the introduction of the hut tax in 1913:<sup>1182</sup>

We will not have the TAX, and if the TAX comes then we will all go to Portuguese Territory. If you take our names [census] then the TAX will follow. We cannot pay the TAX until we have money, and we have no money.<sup>1183</sup>

Taxation was resisted through mobility. Administrative insistence on the payment of taxes caused dissent and widespread flight across international borders.<sup>1184</sup> This even made officials question the rationale behind their policies:

The great idea of the tax was that it would make them work for at least one month of the year and bring them into contact with civilisation and money – and so through an oppressive means, would produce a good end. Well, all the tax has done is simply to frighten the people of us, make it harder to make them work for us (for they will work for the Portuguese and others, traders etc. in moderation, and a good many make their money out of expedition for rubber to the Congo – which they sell to the Portuguese), and depopulate the district (...) If getting people to stay and work was the object, the tax was a failure. If driving the people out was the object, then the tax was barbaric – cruel morally and materially a damned foolish thing, for now we have no villages about to bring in food [i.e. all have fled] (...) The policy here now is to be pretty easy going to regain confidence from the people. Hence the reduced police force, for one thing. People are not being pressed to pay, but are following each other and are paying fairly well.<sup>1185</sup>

The population could not be compelled to work through taxation. Mobility and established patterns of work shaped reactions to taxation and attempts to control labour.<sup>1186</sup> The movement of entire villages into Angola and Congo upon the imposition of taxation, even if only temporary, caused such panic that the administration granted notable concessions. In subsequent years, taxation on plural wives was abolished, road labour was no longer requested and pressure to build large concentrated settlements was relaxed.<sup>1187</sup> Existing patterns of work and mobility provided a negotiating tool of considerable leverage, frustrating the realisation of colonial objectives. Resistance and tax evasion were part of 'a complex range of strategies of resistance, survival and complicity', preventing the simple imposition of colonial power.<sup>1188</sup> 'To be successful imperial hegemony had to come to terms with, incorporate and transform the values of the colonised.'<sup>1189</sup>

---

<sup>1179</sup> Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa'.

<sup>1180</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/346, Native Tax Amendment Ordinance, 1938.

<sup>1181</sup> See: Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1182</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1183</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/1, J.M. Pound, Balunda District Tour Report, 30 September 1910.

<sup>1184</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Musambachime, 'Escape from tyranny'.

<sup>1185</sup> (BOD) MSS Afr S779, Theodore Williams, 23 September 1913, My Dear Father.

<sup>1186</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1187</sup> (NAZ) KSE4/1 Mwinilunga District Notebooks, 29: F.H. Melland's concessions in 1913 were as follows: 1. Taxpayers could import gunpowder for their own use. 2. Taxpayers could visit friends in Congo without pass. 3. Taxpayers could collect and sell rubber. 4. Road works not to be compulsory. 5. Big villages would not be insisted on. 6. Boma would give 10/- for a full load of grain. 7. Second wives would not be taxed.

<sup>1188</sup> Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa', 7.

<sup>1189</sup> Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa', 8.

In order to evade the payment of taxes people would flee on approach of the tax collector. Individuals, family groups or less commonly entire villages, might move into neighbouring areas of Congo or Angola where administrative demands appeared less onerous.<sup>1190</sup> Movement could be on a temporary or on a more long-term basis and continued well into the colonial period: 'A large number of natives who object to the payment of tax betake themselves to one or the other of the foreign territories on our border – thereby avoiding both payment and punishment for neglect thereof.'<sup>1191</sup> Through mobility individuals could negotiate the imposition of taxation, disputing its terms and consequences. Sophisticated forms of tax evasion suggest the impossibility of effectively administering default.<sup>1192</sup> Such 'evasion of payment (...) represented a fundamental challenge to governmental authority and influence', whilst it 'thwarted the disciplinary functions of tax.'<sup>1193</sup>

The significance and impact of taxation could not be reduced to a binary of payment or default. Rather, the payment of taxation might be seen as reflecting the outcome of an intricate process of negotiation, involving deeply entrenched ideological and cultural assumptions about work and power.<sup>1194</sup> From an administrative perspective taxation was about the control of labour and hegemony.<sup>1195</sup> Therefore, colonial officials blamed default on either idleness or purposeful noncompliance with administrative demands. Because taxation was used as a tool to introduce a capitalist culture of labour, the ideas behind taxation were not simply accepted by the local population. Underlying ideas were subject to contestation, adaptation and appropriation, evidenced by the high levels of default whilst the process of negotiation was still underway.<sup>1196</sup>

Initially, people did not pay the tax out of an internalised sense of duty, but rather regarded payment as a symbolic ticking of the administrative box.<sup>1197</sup> A process of ideological contestation, between local and colonial concepts of work, preceded the gradual acceptance of taxation:

A native is only looked on as a man who has paid his tax or not. Reports mention nothing but tax (...)  
The people are all keen on paying – will work for a month and go off quite happy with nothing but a scrap of paper. But they show the feeling of "Thank God that's over – now I can go back and live as I want to!"<sup>1198</sup>

Taxation was zealously debated by chiefs, some of whom wilfully rejected the payment of taxes and discouraged the population to pay. Some chiefs moved to Angola or Congo, or even abdicated rather than concurring with administrative requirements.<sup>1199</sup> Throughout the colonial period numbers of defaulters remained high. The administrative impossibility of enforcing regular payment of taxes evidenced the feeble nature of colonial control on the ground.<sup>1200</sup> Local resistance proved so powerful that the tax rate was lowered from 10 shillings to 7/6 in 1935.<sup>1201</sup> The introduction of taxation was negotiated between colonial officials and the local population, rather than being imposed in a top-

---

<sup>1190</sup> Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1191</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/6, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1928.

<sup>1192</sup> See: Burton, 'The eye of authority'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 11-12, 15-16.

<sup>1193</sup> Burton, 'The eye of authority', 85.

<sup>1194</sup> Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa'; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1195</sup> S.S. Berry, 'Hegemony on a shoestring: Indirect rule and access to agricultural land', *Africa* 62:3 (1992), 327-55.

<sup>1196</sup> Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa'; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1197</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries and contours'.

<sup>1198</sup> (BOD) MSS Afr S779, Theodore Williams, 26 November 1913, My Dear Father. Also: (BOD) MSS Afr S779, Theodore Williams, 11 January 1914, My Dear Father.

<sup>1199</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 11-12, 15-16; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries and contours', 79. Chief Ntambu Sachitulu abdicated upon the imposition of taxation, returning his government staff of office, *ndondu*. Upon this act, a large part of his population was imprisoned for tax default.

<sup>1200</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1201</sup> This reduction did lead to a higher collection rate of 87%, (NAZ) SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1935. Throughout the colonial period the tax was changed from hut tax to poll tax and tax rates were adjusted to match prevailing economic circumstances.

down manner. Taxation was intended as an aid in the colonial 'civilising mission', 'supposedly inculcating more productive and progressive forms of economic and political behaviour.'<sup>1202</sup> Nevertheless, it 'failed to instil a "self-disciplinary culture" into African subjects.'<sup>1203</sup>

Although payment of taxes in kind (in grain, flour, livestock or agricultural implements such as hoes and axes) was allowed initially, the practice was discouraged from the outset and remained confined to exceptional circumstances.<sup>1204</sup> Payment in cash was encouraged and soon became a universal requirement, even if the use and circulation of British currency was still limited in Mwinilunga District at the start of the twentieth century.<sup>1205</sup> To earn tax money, a number of options were available locally. Individuals could sell crops to the mission or the administration, trade beeswax or rubber, engage in road construction work or carry loads.<sup>1206</sup> Local employment was preferred to travelling long distances or engaging in long contracts, and remained significant throughout the (post-)colonial period.<sup>1207</sup> Still, opportunities to earn money within the district were limited and failed to secure tax money for all.<sup>1208</sup> Consequently, mobility proved necessary:

The natives were told that the tax must be paid, and as there was no work in the District they must go farther afield. In the District proper there is practically no opening for employment by which the natives can earn money.<sup>1209</sup>

As in the case of Mozambique: 'A tradition of migration was ingrained in the pattern of everyday life long before opportunities emerged for men to sell their labour (...) to migrate [for work] was a common-sense decision that rendered life more secure and predictable, like other economic activities involving travel.'<sup>1210</sup> Due to a lack of opportunities to earn money locally, numerous individuals were propelled to migrate to seek employment in areas where wages were high and conditions of employment appeared favourable.<sup>1211</sup> Men, and to a lesser extent women, embarked on journeys from Mwinilunga to the mines in Congo, to the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt and in exceptional cases to Southern Rhodesia or South Africa.<sup>1212</sup> These movements should be interpreted within the context of pre-colonial mobility.<sup>1213</sup> Even if labour migration, due to its sheer scope, signified a departure from pre-colonial patterns of mobility,<sup>1214</sup> the existing culture of mobility could still be deployed and restructured to earn tax money and engage in migrant labour.<sup>1215</sup> Labour and taxation were not only at the heart of colonial politics and power, but affected local livelihood strategies in a profound manner.<sup>1216</sup>

---

<sup>1202</sup> Burton, 'The eye of authority', 88.

<sup>1203</sup> Burton, 'The eye of authority', 75; Bush and Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa'.

<sup>1204</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1205</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Von Oppen, *Terms of trade*.

<sup>1206</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; E.L.B. Turner and V.W. Turner, 'Money economy among the Mwinilunga Ndembu: A study of some individual cash budgets', *Rhodes-Livingstone journal* 18 (1955), 19-37.

<sup>1207</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; See: Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1208</sup> W.S. Fisher and J. Hoyte, *Ndotolu: The life stories of Walter and Anna Fisher of Central Africa* (Revised edn., Ikelenge, 1992).

<sup>1209</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/3, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Lunda Division Annual Report, 1915-16. Also: (NAZ) NWP1/2/90 Loc.4916, Reports and Returns, Labour in Mwinilunga District, 1961.

<sup>1210</sup> Harries, *Work, culture and identity*, 17.

<sup>1211</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating'.

<sup>1212</sup> Pritchett, *Friends for life*; Turner, 'Money economy'.

<sup>1213</sup> Rockel, *Carriers of culture*; De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; Andersson, 'Informal moves', 382; Von Oppen, *Terms of trade*.

<sup>1214</sup> O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods'.

<sup>1215</sup> Ngwane, 'Christmas time'.

<sup>1216</sup> O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

Despite the difficulty of earning money and initial acts of resistance, taxes were increasingly paid, as a result of administrative urging and more effective measures of control.<sup>1217</sup> Tax evasion became more difficult as the colonial period progressed and it was soon noted that: 'There is now a considerable sprinkling of tax-payers everywhere, and they all look upon the tax as a much easier thing than they thought, and this favourable opinion is sowing good seed elsewhere.'<sup>1218</sup> To encourage payment, defaulters would be provided with tax relief labour within the district, such as construction work or infrastructural maintenance, road work in particular.<sup>1219</sup> This proved an attractive alternative to employment outside of the district:

The tax relief scheme has been in force on a large scale for two years and hundreds of natives have received work for years in default. The natives while disliking the road work recognised its convenience in that they worked off their tax without having to proceed long distances from their homes.<sup>1220</sup>

Mobility, though enabling access to lucrative means of employment, could prove disruptive of local livelihoods.<sup>1221</sup> Agricultural production did not allow long absences if yields were to be high. Preferably, taxpayers sought to fulfil administrative requirements in ways which would be compatible with agricultural production and would not disrupt existing livelihoods.<sup>1222</sup> At the end of the dry season, when men were preparing their fields, labour would therefore be difficult to contract. Officials would complain that: 'Very few of the taxable population were at work – They have duties to perform at home at this time – garden cutting, building and thatching huts, etc.'<sup>1223</sup> The imposition of taxation did not turn existing patterns of work, labour organisation or hierarchies of priority upside down. Rather, pre-existing practices and ideologies proved remarkably resilient, guiding workers' entrance into the labour market.<sup>1224</sup> Kinship ties and social relationships filtered through in the payment of taxes. Individuals who had gone to work might earn sufficient money to pay taxes for kin and friends, as officials noticed: '[Migrant labourers] will not only earn money for their own tax but also for some of their less robust (or more tired!) friends.'<sup>1225</sup> Taxation was not imposed on a clean slate, but was appropriated within existing social relationships, patterns of work and ideas about labour. Therefore, 'the contours of colonial rule depended as much on factors internal to African communities as on the capacities of the colonial administrations.'<sup>1226</sup>

Even if the introduction of taxation was geared towards creating a readily available and profitable labour force, this did not prove straightforward. Resistance, flight and non-compliance remained powerful tools throughout the colonial period, and could serve to drive through local aims, demands and priorities, concerning the payment of tax and the nature of work.<sup>1227</sup> Taxation and colonial concepts of labour did not transform local ideas about work or social relationships. Forms of everyday resistance and patterns of livelihood procurement succeeded in lowering tax rates, shaping labour contracts and powerfully influencing or altering colonial demands.<sup>1228</sup> Throughout the twentieth century individuals remained distinctly able to choose their place of employment and

---

<sup>1217</sup> See: Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Burton, 'The eye of authority'.

<sup>1218</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/1, J.M. Pound, Lunda District Quarterly Report, July 1913.

<sup>1219</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1220</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/7 Loc.4898, Mwinilunga District Travelling Report, 1937.

<sup>1221</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 141-56; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1222</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 70; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1223</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/6/2, G. Hughes-Chamberlain, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 8 May 1929.

<sup>1224</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

<sup>1225</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/3, F.V. Bruce Miller, Lunda Division Kasempa District Annual Report, 1915/16.

<sup>1226</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 82.

<sup>1227</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1228</sup> See: J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven and London, 1985).

negotiate favourable terms, laying the basis for their engagement in the labour market through mobility.<sup>1229</sup>

*Going to work: Stereotypes, recruitment and the origins of labour migration*

Taxation failed to wrest a compliant labour force. An indigenous work ethic filtered through in work contracts and incipient labour migration. Contrary to colonial discourse and subsequent historiography, 'state and capital did not determine migratory movements from the district (...) recruitment and taxation (...) gave strength to an existing movement rather than creating it from scratch.'<sup>1230</sup> Individuals made attempts to negotiate negative stereotypes, recruitment and labour migration to their own advantage. In examining the rise of labour migration, socio-cultural dispositions should be considered next to official intentions and employers' policies.<sup>1231</sup>

Colonial officials, in association with employers, recruiters and missionaries, formulated potent and persistent stereotypes regarding work, labour and culture.<sup>1232</sup> 'Tribal', 'ethnic' and 'racial' stereotypes were developed regarding the 'work ethic' of various population groups, such as the Lunda of Mwinilunga District.<sup>1233</sup> Examining these stereotypes can reveal intricate negotiations about labour, labour control and power. By officials and employers alike, the Lunda were mostly assigned negative valuations. They were deemed suitable only for lower paid, menial types of labour, in particular woodcutting, household work or farm employment.<sup>1234</sup> Frequent complaints concerning the 'lazy' nature of the Lunda, their 'disinclination' to work and the difficulty to discipline or control workers were voiced: 'Up to now the Andembo and Alunda have been very much "stay-at-homes" and it will be some time before they will take long journeys far from home for new work to do.'<sup>1235</sup> Lunda messengers were described as 'not amenable to discipline', prone to desertion, and 'thoroughly antagonistic to work.'<sup>1236</sup> This colonial stereotyping was rooted in an attempt to classify and control population groups, in order to more easily tax and extract labour from them.<sup>1237</sup> Nonetheless, Lunda employees subverted colonial intentions by negotiating favourable contracts and work conditions exactly due to negative stereotypes.<sup>1238</sup>

Colonial administrators viewed the initial rejection of work and irregular work habits among the Lunda with despair.<sup>1239</sup> Officials complained about a lack of 'desire to work', stating that 'references to the "dignity of labour" leave them quite cold.'<sup>1240</sup> Paradoxically, it was this defiant attitude which enabled workers to push through their preferences and exert influence as to length of service, rate of

---

<sup>1229</sup> See: Rockel, *Carriers of culture*; Harries, *Work, culture and identity*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

<sup>1230</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 386.

<sup>1231</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1232</sup> See: Luchembe, 'Ethnic stereotypes'; Crehan, *The fractured community*; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; B. Siegel, 'The "wild" and "lazy" Lamba as ethnic stereotype on the Central African Copperbelt', in: L. Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* (London etc., 1989); R. Papstein, 'Ethnic identity and tribalism in the Upper Zambezi region of Zambia, 1830-1981', in: Vail, *The creation of tribalism*; L. White, *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa* (Berkeley etc., 2000).

<sup>1233</sup> K. Crehan, 'Tribes' and the people who read books: Managing history in colonial Zambia', *Journal of Southern African studies* 23:2 (1997), 203-18.

<sup>1234</sup> Luchembe, 'Ethnic stereotypes', 31; Mitchell and Epstein, 'Occupational prestige'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1235</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/1, A.W. Bonfield, Lunda Sub-District Quarterly Report, 30 September 1916.

<sup>1236</sup> (NAZ) A5/2/1 Loc.4003, G.A. McGregor, Balunda District Annual Report, 1908-09.

<sup>1237</sup> Crehan, 'Tribes and the people who read books'.

<sup>1238</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1239</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1240</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/2, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Lunda Sub-District Quarterly Report, 30 September 1928.

pay and type of work.<sup>1241</sup> Both capitalism and colonial governmentality were negotiated through an internal work ethic, which individuals sought to uphold.<sup>1242</sup>

A curious system of labour is in vogue with the Balunda of this part. They are willing, apparently, to go to the forest and return at intervals to suit their own tastes with building poles, bundles of thatching grass, etc., for sale on delivery and to engage at other work provided that, when the humour takes a man he be permitted to demand and receive payment for whatever he may have performed – half a day's work, a day's work, or more, or less as the case may be.<sup>1243</sup>

Although this attitude, which was denounced as 'essentially unsound, disorganised, and unsystematic', greatly frustrated colonial attempts to promote the regular provision of labour or familiarise workers with fixed contracts, local resistance proved resilient and remarkably difficult to break.<sup>1244</sup> In spite of administrative efforts to promote labour migration to farms and mines, volunteers were not readily forthcoming.<sup>1245</sup> Contracts and terms of service proposed by officials and recruiters appeared unattractive to local workers, who preferred to choose their own place of employment.<sup>1246</sup>

The aLunda do not take kindly to work of any kind (...) I am of the opinion that it is premature to allow a recruiter to operate in this division (...) To send the aLunda away from their homes for a lengthy period would be impolitic until they have thoroughly settled down, made good gardens and villages (...) Mine work is not suited to the local natives; they have not the physique (...) Very few of them have gone down to the farmers (...) Even if the farmers sent a recruiter here the results would be disappointing for years: the local native does not know the work, and also is most averse to binding himself down for more than two months. The work that he knows is wood cutting and he is most sought after by Congo contractors.<sup>1247</sup>

As a consequence of the low esteem of Lunda workers among employers and the state, long-term contracts were not insisted on, coercive labour recruiters were barred from the district and consequently individuals managed to exert influence over the contracts and terms of service under which they would be employed.<sup>1248</sup>

During the 1930s, when the Copperbelt mines were attracting increasing numbers of employees, Lunda capacity to work was judged negatively: 'The general poor physique of local natives preclude them from being employed, whether at the mines or elsewhere, at normal wages.'<sup>1249</sup> Nevertheless, such negative stereotypes created a space for manoeuvre and enabled the rejection of arduous or undesirable patterns of work.<sup>1250</sup> Lunda labourers were able to voice preferences as to place of work and terms of service:

Agriculture and surface work are most popular with the Natives of this District. Until recently they were somewhat despised as employees owing to difficulties with their language and debility due mainly to hookworm. But the shortage of labour has given them the chance to enter the labour markets and they are proving that they are not quite so inferior as was imagined.<sup>1251</sup>

Stereotypes proved remarkably enduring and could form the basis for 'ethnic' identities.<sup>1252</sup> Even today Bemba workers on the Copperbelt continue to regard the Lunda as 'weak' and suitable for low-rank positions only, referring to them as 'scavengers' and quarrelling with them fiercely in beer-halls.<sup>1253</sup>

---

<sup>1241</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

<sup>1242</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1243</sup> (NAZ) HC1/2/43 BS2/251 Loc.130, G.A. McGregor, Balunda District Monthly Report, May 1909.

<sup>1244</sup> (NAZ) HC1/2/43 BS2/251 Loc.130, G.A. McGregor, Balunda District Monthly Report, May 1909.

<sup>1245</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

<sup>1246</sup> For more on labour recruitment, see: Von Onselen, *Chibaro*; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1247</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/3, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 March 1915; (NAZ) KSE6/1/4, K.S. Kinross, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 March 1925.

<sup>1248</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1249</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 December 1935.

<sup>1250</sup> See: Siegel, 'The wild and lazy Lamba'.

<sup>1251</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/151, Annual Report Western Province, 1937.

<sup>1252</sup> Crehan, 'Tribes and the people who read books'; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1253</sup> Interview with William Ngangu, 26 February 2010, Ndola.

Yet such negative valuations could be used to the advantage of workers, enabling them to negotiate their own work, type of contract and rate of pay.

Especially during the early period of colonial rule, when labour did not yet prove readily forthcoming, recruitment was resorted to.<sup>1254</sup> Both government and employers would send recruiters out to the villages in an attempt to engage workers for fixed contracts, usually for six or twelve months of service.<sup>1255</sup> Although labour contracted through recruitment might not have been strictly coerced, a strong element of pressure could and often had to be applied to engage adequate numbers of workers.<sup>1256</sup> Colonial officials acknowledged this:

It is (...) useless to pretend that the recruitment of large numbers of natives by Government uniformed messengers is popular amongst the people. Forced Labour is perhaps too strong a term to use in this connexion; nevertheless, the Native Commissioner would have to wait many months for say two hundred volunteers for the Boundary Commission or any other unknown employer of labour.<sup>1257</sup>

Yet recruiters could not direct the labour force.<sup>1258</sup> In the area of Mwinilunga labour was generally not obtained by brute coercion, but was rather induced by persuasion.<sup>1259</sup> Officials attempted to induce labour by offering high wages and favourable terms of contract. Existing work habits, preferences and outlooks towards work powerfully shaped reactions to colonial labour contracts.<sup>1260</sup> The culture of mobility influenced the attitude towards labour migration and facilitated resistance to unfavourable contracts: 'By moving from area to area, migrants exhibited a quick appreciation of wage differences and used their mobility as a bargaining tool.'<sup>1261</sup>

By what means did recruiters, employers and the state attempt to contract labour? First of all, recruiters proved heavily reliant on the assistance of conductors, headmen and chiefs.<sup>1262</sup> These intermediaries would assist recruiters and persuade individuals to engage. Intermediaries were not mere pawns of recruiters, but could exert power over the process of recruitment, for example by advising individuals to refrain from engaging.<sup>1263</sup> Especially headmen and chiefs 'created a space – both discursive and physical – between Company and local action, and inserted themselves into it.'<sup>1264</sup> Secondly, recruiters would frequently resort to material incentives to engage individuals in contracts. Blankets and similar gifts would be dispensed to seduce prospective workers.<sup>1265</sup> By refusing long-term contracts or by weighing employers against one another, workers could exert influence over demands made by recruiters.<sup>1266</sup> Local resistance proved resilient and individuals could assert their preferences, for example by using mobility as a tool:

---

<sup>1254</sup> See: Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*; M. Barrett, 'Walking home majestically': Consumption and the enactment of social status among labour migrants from Barotseland, 1935-1965', in: R. Ross, M. Hinfelaar and I. Peša (eds.), *The objects of life in Central Africa: The history of consumption and social change, 1840-1980* (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 93-113.

<sup>1255</sup> T.R.M. Mvusi, 'The 'politics of trypanosomiasis' revisited: Labour mobilization and labour migration in colonial Zambia: The Robert Williams Company in Lubemba, 1901-1911', *Transafrican journal of history* 23 (1994), 43-68.

<sup>1256</sup> O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods'; E.P. Makambe, 'The mobilisation of African labour across the Zambezi for the Zimbabwean colonial market before the Chibaro era, 1898-1903', *African studies* 51:2 (1992), 277-94.

<sup>1257</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/2, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Quarterly Report, 30 June 1928.

<sup>1258</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 386.

<sup>1259</sup> This observation is based on a reading of archival sources and numerous oral interviews – it goes against the views proposed by Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Macpherson, *Anatomy of a conquest*.

<sup>1260</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1261</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 42-3; Rockel, *Carriers of culture*.

<sup>1262</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 141-56; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 79.

<sup>1263</sup> See: S.S. Berry, *No condition is permanent: The social dynamics of agrarian change in sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, 1993); P.J.J. Konings, 'Chieftaincy, labour control and capitalist development in Cameroon', *Journal of legal pluralism and unofficial law* 37/8 (1996), 329-46.

<sup>1264</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 79.

<sup>1265</sup> Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

<sup>1266</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

The average Kalunda will not willingly bind himself to serve a six months contract with any one. He much prefers to engage himself to some unknown contractor for a month or two at wood cutting in the Congo, and take the risk as to whether he is ever paid.<sup>1267</sup>

Established work ethic thwarted the plans of recruiters and employers. Resistance to engage in long-term contracts proved difficult to break. Collective non-compliance left employers with little choice but to seek labour elsewhere:

[Lunda recruits] all agreed to proceed to Lubumbashi for six months work. Robert Williams & Co., will not accept natives for less than six months work. It takes about a month before raw natives get into the way of work, so a three months man would only have two useful months of work (...) If sufficient labour cannot be got from this district it means bringing up labour from Portuguese East Africa and herein lies a chance of Kasempa labour being eventually shut out from a means of earning their tax money.<sup>1268</sup>

Negative stereotypes of Lunda labourers, who were described as unwilling to complete long contracts or perform dangerous tasks, could serve to avoid unattractive terms of employment and obtain shorter or less hazardous contracts.<sup>1269</sup> Workers 'had a certain degree of freedom and flexibility, choosing for themselves their employer, type of work, and length of service.'<sup>1270</sup> Ultimately, recruitment and colonial state policy could not coercively direct labour movement, as 'migrants were active participants in the labour market, giving shape to different migration trajectories – differentiated according to wages obtainable, distance from home and length of absence.'<sup>1271</sup>

Prospective workers would weigh conditions of service, seeking the terms most favourable to existing livelihoods. They sought 'to control how, when, for whom, and at what price they would sell their labor. Their aim was (...) to maintain their freedom to enter the labor market on their own terms.'<sup>1272</sup> Work preferences were far from uniform, differing according to personal aspirations. Whereas some workers valued cash payment, others preferred easy access to consumer goods.<sup>1273</sup> Flexible contracts were generally favoured, whereas fixed long-term contracts and long hazardous journeys on foot were avoided as much as possible:

The average Alunda is not anxious to give his confidence to any white man that may come along, especially when they are told that if they accept employment it will mean they will be away from their homes for over twelve months (...) The majority of the people just walk over the border to the Congo – work for a contractor for a month or two then return to their villages when they have enough money for their tax.<sup>1274</sup>

Where possible, workers sought terms of employment which would be compatible with their personal aspirations, going to work of their own accord and using mobility as a negotiating tool, rather than acceding to the wishes of recruiters.<sup>1275</sup>

#### *Comparing the Copperbelts: Work and mobility*

Although official records from Mwinilunga District mainly dealt with recruited labour, independently employed workers entered the labour market in increasing numbers over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>1276</sup> At first, knowledge of urban employment or terms of service within the confines of the village remained limited. Communication between Mwinilunga District and urban centres was difficult

---

<sup>1267</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/2, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Quarterly Report, 31 March 1926.

<sup>1268</sup> (NAZ) KSE1/1/1, R.W. Yule, 13 October 1915; Mwinilunga was part of Kasempa District.

<sup>1269</sup> Siegel, 'The wild and lazy Lamba'.

<sup>1270</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 70.

<sup>1271</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 127.

<sup>1272</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 72.

<sup>1273</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/2, C.H. Anley, Mwinilunga Sub-District Quarterly Report, 31 December 1921.

<sup>1274</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/4, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 March 1922.

<sup>1275</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1276</sup> Arguably, the occurrence of recruited labour was overrepresented in the colonial archives because the colonial state played an important role in facilitating recruitment. This point has been raised by: Andersson, 'Informal moves'; T. Sunseri, 'Labour migration in colonial Tanzania and the hegemony of South African historiography', *African affairs* 95:381 (1996), 581-98.

to establish, whereas the journey to the mines was long and arduous.<sup>1277</sup> Although recruiters might provide transport to the workplace, men most commonly sought security in numbers and travelled in large groups. Friends, kin and individuals from neighbouring villages might gather to decide on a date to embark on the journey to their place of employment. In all, the journey might take several weeks to complete. Migrants would prepare themselves by gathering food, blankets, tools and trade items to carry on the road.<sup>1278</sup> Charms, such as *ndakala*, which could drive away wild animals, snakes and other threats, would equally be taken along. Once the preparations had been completed, travellers would embark in groups of up to twenty people, usually consisting of kin or members of neighbouring villages. Passing through the Boma first, workers would start dispersing upon arrival in the labour centres, some stopping in Ndola, others continuing to Broken Hill or even Johannesburg.<sup>1279</sup> Not only on the road, but even more so upon arrival, support among kin proved essential. Networks established by previous migrants could facilitate access to shelter, food and employment, spread news on the latest work openings or gossip from the home front.<sup>1280</sup> Through movement individuals forged new ties of identity, whilst reinforcing, expanding or questioning existing ones. A culture of mobility, as well as existing social relationships and ideas about work, shaped workers' engagement in the labour market. By the 1930s it was stated that 'the people are keen to earn money and are willing to work.'<sup>1281</sup>

Numerous individuals from Mwinilunga District sought employment in mining and railway hubs in Congo. Building on patterns of cross-border mobility and ties of Lunda identity, mines such as Kambove, Musonoi and Ruwe, as well as towns such as Elisabethville, Kolwezi and Mutshatsha, proved popular destinations.<sup>1282</sup> Employment in Congo was particularly attractive prior to the full development of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt in the 1930s, but Congolese towns continued to draw migrants throughout the twentieth century.<sup>1283</sup> Workers in Congo engaged in a plethora of jobs, ranging from wood cutting and household work, to trade and mining. Urban centres in Congo were located close to Mwinilunga District and could be reached with less travel than alternatives within Zambia.<sup>1284</sup> The ease and speed of travel enabled workers to engage in short-term contracts in Congo. This minimised the disruption of village life, caused by the absence of male labour force, as workers could still engage in agricultural production upon completing their contracts.<sup>1285</sup> Workers 'could choose when to work, which allowed them to choose periods that would conflict the least with household agricultural labor needs.'<sup>1286</sup> Labour migration and agricultural production did not have to conflict, but could be combined.<sup>1287</sup> Due to proximity: 'those who work close by in the Congo seem to come home more often, and to bring more with them, than those employed in the towns of this Territory.'<sup>1288</sup>

---

<sup>1277</sup> Descriptions of travel are provided in: Fisher and Hoyte, *Ndotolu*; R.J. Short, *African sunset* (London, 1973).

<sup>1278</sup> This account is based on numerous oral interviews, for example Mr Tepson Kandungu, 11 October 2010, Ntambu, but compare: Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1279</sup> Compare to: Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

<sup>1280</sup> Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 38-44; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'; J.C. Mitchell (ed.), *Social networks in urban situations: Analyses of personal relationships in Central African towns* (Manchester, 1969).

<sup>1281</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/952, K.S. Kinross, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 20 January 1933.

<sup>1282</sup> See: Vellut, 'Mining in the Belgian Congo'; Higginson, *A working class in the making*.

<sup>1283</sup> Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian rule*.

<sup>1284</sup> Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian rule*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating'.

<sup>1285</sup> This view is based on a wide reading of archival sources and numerous oral interviews, for example Mr Jackson Samakai, 16 April 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>1286</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 70.

<sup>1287</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 127.

<sup>1288</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/957, R.N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 6 March 1949.

Others opted to work in Congo in an attempt to retain autonomy of contract, avoid the governmentality of the state, or for purposes of tax evasion.<sup>1289</sup> Movement to Congo might circumvent official channels:

most natives earn their taxes in the Congo (...) Many leave the district without passes, and obtain them at Solwezi, or proceed with friends who have passes already (...) the local native (...) is most averse to binding himself down for more than two months. The work that he knows is woodcutting, and he is most sought after by Congo contractors (...) there have been several attempts at illegal recruiting by capitaos sent by these Congo contractors.<sup>1290</sup>

Although these labour movements could cause administrative headaches, they provided workers with the opportunity to weigh conditions of work on both sides of the border, choosing those which seemed most favourable.<sup>1291</sup> Congolese employment challenged the popularity of the Zambian Copperbelt:

The Congo labour market has always been very popular with these people as it is handy and also, for the main part, they are working with kindred tribes. Whenever the Congo market shrinks, the movement of labour towards the Copperbelt increases greatly in volume, but as soon as new mines are started inside the Congo Belge the popularity switches back again to the Congo market.<sup>1292</sup>

Social connectivity played a role, as in Congolese towns Lunda relatives might be encountered, whereas on the Zambian Copperbelt Bemba speaking workers predominated.<sup>1293</sup> As a consequence, within Mwinilunga District 'the influence of the Congo is everywhere felt', and 'so long as the boundary cuts across the tribal pattern so long the people will come and go.'<sup>1294</sup> An added benefit was that 'the Belgians give assistance to labourers families and most of these men had taken their families with them to work', whereas in colonial Northern Rhodesia a policy of encouraging lone male migrants instead of families predominated, particularly before the 1950s.<sup>1295</sup> Overall, it was noted that 'labourers and their families go there where the prospects of employment appear most inviting', and in Congo 'well paid employment and good living conditions are to be found without difficulty.'<sup>1296</sup>

In spite of Congolese attractions, by the late 1920s it was remarked that 'as each year passes the sub-district natives go of their own accord in ever increasing numbers to seek congenial employment at N'changa, Kansanshi, Kipushi and other labour centres.'<sup>1297</sup> From the 1930s onwards work within the territory, particularly on the Copperbelt, gained acceptance due to the availability of employment which matched indigenous work patterns and preferences:<sup>1298</sup>

Nchanga and Kipushi continue to be popular labour centres. The present generation has watched them grow up and the kind of work available so far – building, thatching, timber cutting, road making etc. – appeals to them; moreover they go there voluntarily and independently.<sup>1299</sup>

It was hoped that positive messages spread by returning migrants would attract more workers in future: 'if they return with good reports of their treatment, pay, etc., more of their friends will follow their example and offer their services during the coming year to employers domiciled in this

---

<sup>1289</sup> Musambachime, 'Escape from tyranny'.

<sup>1290</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/4, K.S. Kinross, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 March 1925.

<sup>1291</sup> See: L. White, 'Class struggle and cannibalism: Storytelling and history writing on the Copperbelts of colonial Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo', in: *Speaking with vampires*.

<sup>1292</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/956, F.M.N. Heath, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 21 January 1948.

<sup>1293</sup> See: Larmer and Macola, 'The origins'; Larmer, *Rethinking African politics*.

<sup>1294</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/966, W.D. Grant, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 24 October 1958.

<sup>1295</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/17, F.M.N. Heath, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 21 January 1948; See: J.L. Parpart, "'Where is your mother?': Gender, urban marriage, and colonial discourse on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1924-1945', *The international journal of African historical studies* 27:2 (1994), 241-71; G. Chauncey, 'The locus of reproduction: Women's labour in the Zambian Copperbelt, 1927-1953', *Journal of Southern African studies* 7:2 (1980-81), 135-64.

<sup>1296</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/963, R.S. Thompson, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 26 April 1955.

<sup>1297</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/2/2, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Quarterly Report, 31 March 1929.

<sup>1298</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1299</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/6, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 December 1928.

country.<sup>1300</sup> Within certain limits, workers could negotiate or even choose employers, conditions of service and rates of pay, according to their own preference.<sup>1301</sup> Even after years of experience with labour contracts it was noted that: 'the Mwinilunga native prefers choosing his own type of work and does not relish long term contracts.'<sup>1302</sup> What motivated individuals to engage in migrant labour and how were ties between the city and the country, between Mwinilunga District and urban centres, forged and upheld?

### Of modernist narratives and social connectivity: Motives for labour migration

A variety of factors propelled individuals to seek waged employment. Examining the rise of labour migration from Mwinilunga District (where people went to work, which jobs they performed, how they were contracted, under what conditions and how this changed over time) can shed light on the motives behind migration.<sup>1303</sup> Special attention will be paid to the interconnections between rural and urban strategies and ways of life. How did economic, social, political and cultural factors contribute to labour migration, mobility and self-realisation?

Labour migration ratios from Mwinilunga District increased steadily throughout the colonial period and remained high after independence. Whereas in 1935 7.5% of the taxable male population was reported to be at work outside the district, figures rose to 21% in 1947, 33% in 1952 and even 56% in 1960.<sup>1304</sup> After independence labour migration ratios were no longer measured as such, but it can be postulated that migration from Mwinilunga District to urban areas continued in large numbers.<sup>1305</sup> Post-colonial government policies, lifting colonial restrictions on mobility and relaxing regulations on urban residence, caused Zambia to 'reap the whirlwind'. Rural population flocked to the towns, because 'everyone wanted to come to urban areas in search of work, pleasure or even schooling.'<sup>1306</sup> Only after 1980 were there signs of diminishing rural outmigration, or even counter-urbanisation, as the national economic downturn caused a glut in urban employment and redirected migration flows away from the Copperbelt to the capital city Lusaka, district centres such as Mwinilunga Township or

---

<sup>1300</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/5, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 March 1926.

<sup>1301</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1302</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 December 1937.

<sup>1303</sup> See: Mitchell, 'The causes of labour migration'; Epstein, 'Urbanization and social change'.

<sup>1304</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/133, R.N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1935; (NAZ) SEC2/154, F.M.N Heath, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1947; (NAZ) SEC2/135, W.G. Reeves, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1952; (NAZ) NWP1/2/102 Loc.4919, E.L. Button, North Western Province Annual Report, 1960.

<sup>1305</sup> For the post-independence period: 'the relatively large population increase for North-Western Province can be partly attributed to the relatively small rate of out-migration in the Province. Whereas the other rural provinces all experienced high rates of net out-migration (...) the position in North-Western Province appears to have been rather more stable, though all districts except Solwezi do show some losses due to out-migration, mainly towards the Copperbelt (...) The loss of population, however, consists almost entirely of males of active working age who are either temporary or semi-permanent/permanent emigrants. What matters is that the Province is losing the most vigorous sector of its population, which cannot but retard the development of the Province.' D.S. Johnson (ed.), *Handbook to the North-Western Province 1980* (Lusaka, 1980), 74; The population of Mwinilunga District increased from 45,991 in 1963, to 51,398 in 1969, to 68,845 in 1980, to 81,496 in 1990 – this gives annual growth rates of 2.7% over the period 1969-1980 and 1.7% over the period 1980-1990. P.O. Ohadike, *Demographic perspectives in Zambia: Rural-urban growth and social change* (Lusaka, 1981); M.E. Jackman, *Recent population movements in Zambia: Some aspects of the 1969 census* (Manchester, 1973). Based on the 1969 census Ohadike and Jackman both calculated 'expected growth rates', concluding that -2.6% and -3.8% respectively were due to out-migration from Mwinilunga District. Compared to other areas, the North-Western Province is an area of relatively low out-migration, Jackman, 56: 'The general picture of this area between the two censuses was one of slight out-migration (...) By far the most important migration link during 1968-69 was with the Copperbelt, but the area is losing population very slowly compared to the other areas with major Copperbelt links, the rate of out-migration being only slightly higher than that of the western area.'

<sup>1306</sup> (NAZ) HM77/PP/2, P.W. Matoka, A Contribution to the Media Resource Center Freedom Forum, 8 November 1997 – Review of Zambia's 33 Years of Independence.

to rural areas.<sup>1307</sup> The length of service showed an increase over time, but could fluctuate considerably according to individual cases. Whereas in 1935 a taxable man on average worked 0.75 months a year, in the 1950s labour migrants stayed away at their place of employment for an average of four years.<sup>1308</sup> Even then, some would work for several months only, whereas others would remain in town their entire life.<sup>1309</sup> How can this persistent trend of labour migration from Mwinilunga District be explained?

The history of labour migration in Zambia has predominantly been understood in terms of a 'modernist narrative'.<sup>1310</sup> (Post-)colonial officials and scholars have described labour migration as 'the progressive, stage-wise emergence of a stable, settled urban working class.'<sup>1311</sup> Allegedly, labour migration developed through a number of 'stages', whereby an initial phase of short-term circulatory migration was replaced by partial stabilisation of labour and finally by permanent urbanisation.<sup>1312</sup> This view proposes that lone male migrants were increasingly supplanted by migrating families, including women and children.<sup>1313</sup> Furthermore, this 'modernist narrative' suggests that ties between rural and urban areas were increasingly severed, as migrants settled in town for longer periods of time.<sup>1314</sup> Such views present the urban and the rural as two opposing spheres, 'the urban as the site of modernisation, individualisation and change, as opposed to the rural as the locus of tradition, communality and continuity.'<sup>1315</sup> In this sense, movement away from rural areas towards urban stabilisation becomes a movement towards modernity, entailing social change and rupture.<sup>1316</sup> This stage-like progression has been fundamentally contested recently.<sup>1317</sup> Critics have suggested the co-existence of various patterns of migration, thereby questioning the idea of the 'typical migrant'.<sup>1318</sup> Furthermore, the enduring ties between rural and urban areas, as well as recent counter-urbanisation, seem to disprove ideas of linear change.<sup>1319</sup> Migration patterns from Mwinilunga can challenge the 'modernist narrative' on several points. First of all, migration appeared to follow a wide range of patterns rather than a single linear course from temporary migrant labourer to permanent urbanite. Secondly, ties between rural and urban areas have not been severed. Rather, labour migration might be seen in terms of social connectivity, establishing links between rural and urban localities. Thirdly, the modernist narrative places undue emphasis on economic motives for migration. Instead, life histories from Mwinilunga suggest the importance of socio-cultural dispositions and aspirations towards self-realisation.<sup>1320</sup> Labour migration might be viewed in terms of social connectivity and continuity, instead of emphasising rupture and change.<sup>1321</sup>

---

<sup>1307</sup> Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'; D. Potts, 'Shall we go home? Increasing urban poverty in African cities and migration processes', *The geographical journal* 161:3 (1995), 245-64; Pottier, *Migrants no more*; V. Jamal and J. Weeks, 'The vanishing rural-urban gap in sub-Saharan Africa', *International labour review* 127:3 (1988), 271-92.

<sup>1308</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 December 1935; (NAZ) SEC2/960, K.J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 28 September 1952.

<sup>1309</sup> This view is based on numerous oral interviews.

<sup>1310</sup> See: Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'; Also: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 141-56; Crehan, *The fractured community*. See: Epstein and Mitchell.

<sup>1311</sup> Ferguson, 'Mobile workers', 385.

<sup>1312</sup> Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'.

<sup>1313</sup> Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'; Chauncey, 'The locus of reproduction'.

<sup>1314</sup> Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1315</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 89; See: J. Ferguson, 'The Country and the City on the Copperbelt', *Cultural anthropology* 7:1 (1992), 80-92.

<sup>1316</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 12.

<sup>1317</sup> Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'.

<sup>1318</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; But also: Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1319</sup> Van Binsbergen, 'Globalization and virtuality'; Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'.

<sup>1320</sup> Inspiration for this approach has been taken from: Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1321</sup> See: De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; De Bruijn, Van Dijk and Foeken, *Mobile Africa*, 2.

From the outset, labour migration from Mwinilunga District followed a variety of patterns. Mobility in general, and labour migration in particular, have hitherto been interpreted as means of broadening the local horizon, establishing links between rural and urban areas, between Mwinilunga District and the world at large.<sup>1322</sup> Labour migration can be viewed within the 'culture of mobility'. It was not necessarily a transformative act, but could be constitutive of rural society in Mwinilunga District.<sup>1323</sup> Labour migration could be a strategy to enhance the security and predictability of life.<sup>1324</sup> It formed part of a diversity of livelihood options, existing next to, and potentially contributing to, agricultural production, animal husbandry or waged labour within the district.<sup>1325</sup> Labour migration was a strategy, involving an assessment of broader socio-economic options, which could change over time.<sup>1326</sup> Some individuals might migrate to town, marry there and never move back to Mwinilunga, whereas others would undertake only one trip to work for several months, thereafter investing their earnings in agriculture or trade.<sup>1327</sup> These diverse possibilities cannot be reduced to fixed stages. Even a single individual could combine various patterns of movement within the course of a lifetime.<sup>1328</sup> Nyambanza Kaisala, for example, was born in Sailunga Chiefdom in 1905. After having worked for four years as a cook in Elisabethville, Congo, he started working as a *capitao* in the same city for eight years. Thereafter, he continued his employment as a *capitao*, but moved to Kolwezi, Congo, where he was employed for ten years. Subsequently he worked at Nkana mine, Zambia, for six years, after which he returned to Mwinilunga to work as a government *kapasu* for six months. This employment history of 28.5 years straddles the boundaries between short-term migration and stabilised urbanisation. Leaving as a single migrant, Nyambanza married after his return from Congo and took his wife with him to subsequent places of employment. In the course of his career he visited his home village, though not at regular intervals. Moreover, although he did return to Mwinilunga District after his retirement from the Copperbelt, he settled in the Boma rather than in his village of birth.<sup>1329</sup> Through such life histories, the enduring and complex connections between rural and urban spheres become apparent.

#### *Money, consumption and building wealth*

The causes and motives for labour migration are manifold. The factors stressed most frequently and forcefully, however, pertain to the economic sphere.<sup>1330</sup> Labour migration has been seen as the outcome of 'push' and 'pull' factors, driven by the relative poverty and lack of opportunity in rural areas (push factors), and attracted by a growing demand for labour in industrialised urban areas (pull factors).<sup>1331</sup> Economic explanations for migration have been provided at individual and structural levels.<sup>1332</sup> Labour migrants are either seen as acting individually, according to the rationality of economic self-interest and profit maximisation.<sup>1333</sup> Or labour migration is seen as the structural outcome of global capitalism.<sup>1334</sup> In this latter view, individuals and entire rural communities have been 'gradually divorced from their means of production and subsistence', propelling the need for labour migration to urban areas where the process of 'primitive capitalist accumulation', deliberately

<sup>1322</sup> See: Van Binsbergen, 'Globalization and virtuality'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1323</sup> See: Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1324</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 17.

<sup>1325</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1326</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 141-2.

<sup>1327</sup> This view is based on numerous oral interviews.

<sup>1328</sup> These points are equally made by Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1329</sup> (BOD) Richard Cranmer Denning Papers, 15 boxes, Uncatalogued, Notes from 1948.

<sup>1330</sup> See: Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'; Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

<sup>1331</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1345; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1332</sup> See: Urry, *Mobilities*.

<sup>1333</sup> O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods' critiques agency and livelihoods.

<sup>1334</sup> Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'.

undertaken by the state through taxation and coercion, was already underway.<sup>1335</sup> This process would result in the formation of rural 'labour reserves', a 'rural-urban divide', 'proletarianisation', but also potential 'development'.<sup>1336</sup> Economic factors are indeed important in explaining patterns of labour migration. Colonial officials proposed the need to earn a monetary income, especially for purposes of taxation, as the driving force behind migration from Mwinilunga District.<sup>1337</sup> Some officials judged the Lunda as not very ambitious in monetary terms or consumptive aspirations, asserting that 'sufficient money to pay their tax, and obtain a few clothes is all they desire.'<sup>1338</sup> Others, however, complained about 'the exodus of the younger generation to gain what may be termed "easy money" by work on the mines', stating that 'the earning capacity of the native has increased enormously and must continue to grow – more money creating fresh wants.'<sup>1339</sup> Opportunities in urban areas were viewed in relation to those in rural areas: 'The cost of living is rising rapidly and we find that many educated men (...) will seek employment in the Copperbelt where more money can be earned [than within Mwinilunga].'<sup>1340</sup> Nevertheless, labour migration was not so much a 'last resort' of impoverished rural producers who sought to generate tax money, but could be 'a deliberate strategy to accumulate wealth.'<sup>1341</sup> The economic rationale behind labour migration was underpinned by consumptive aspirations, a hitherto largely overlooked factor in explanations of mobility.<sup>1342</sup>

Consumption could constitute a powerful incentive to earn money and engage in labour migration.<sup>1343</sup> One labour migrant explained his trip to Johannesburg, largely on foot, as driven by a desire to purchase clothing, to obtain a nice suit contributing to good apparel.<sup>1344</sup> Consumptive desires explain why recruiters offered blankets to prospective workers, and why these could be effective inducements to engage in labour contracts.<sup>1345</sup> Consumption, however, was not a purely economic act, but was connected to social status and relationships.<sup>1346</sup> These links become apparent in the bridewealth negotiations in a local court at the beginning of the twentieth century. Labour migration provided access to consumer goods, and thereby penetrated social relationships such as marriage negotiations, influencing demands, stakes and expectations of marriage partners.<sup>1347</sup> In 1917 a migrant labourer engaged a girl and gave her uncle a string of beads as initial bridewealth. When he returned from work in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) demands were raised and the man provided two coats to the girl's uncle and a handkerchief to the girl. After an additional trip to Lubumbashi (Congo) the girl's mother was given a blanket, whereas the girl received a four yard piece of calico and a dress.<sup>1348</sup> Because money earning opportunities and access to consumer goods remained limited within Mwinilunga District, labour migration became an attractive avenue of consumption.<sup>1349</sup> Labour migration and the increased wealth this generated could raise expectations of consumption and thereby stimulate the need to earn money and migrate. Migrants' markers of economic success, in the form of clothing, a bicycle or sewing machine, might entice others to pursue a migrant career as well.<sup>1350</sup> Consumption

---

<sup>1335</sup> Plange, 'Opportunity cost and labour migration', 661.

<sup>1336</sup> See: Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective'.

<sup>1337</sup> This view is based on a wide reading of archival sources (NAZ).

<sup>1338</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/4, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 March 1924.

<sup>1339</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol.1, D.C. Hughes-Chamberlain, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 December 1929.

<sup>1340</sup> (NAZ) North-Western Province African Provincial Council, April 1958.

<sup>1341</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 128.

<sup>1342</sup> See: Ross, Hinfelaar and Peša, *The objects of life*, 2-3.

<sup>1343</sup> Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

<sup>1344</sup> Interview with Mr Makajina Kahilu, 8 March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>1345</sup> (NAZ) KSE1/1/1, R.W. Yule, 13 October 1915.

<sup>1346</sup> See the discussion on 'wealth in people' in Chapter 4. See: G. Wilson, *An essay on the economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, 1942).

<sup>1347</sup> See: Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

<sup>1348</sup> (NAZ) KSE3/1/2/1, Mwaweshya v. Mulambila of Keshi Village, 2 August 1917.

<sup>1349</sup> See: Turner, 'Money economy'; Sardanis, *Africa*.

<sup>1350</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 393; Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

could act as a self-propelling force behind labour migration, but this was only due to the linkages between consumption and social relationships.<sup>1351</sup> Economic factors were not the sole determinants of labour migration: 'Population movements are not economic reactions to push and pull, but patterns of migration are determined by social and cultural institutions, embedded in local customs and ideologies.'<sup>1352</sup>

Paradoxically, people continued to move to urban areas even in times of economic slump, in the 1930s and 1970s, when employment was difficult to find.<sup>1353</sup> This evidences that economic factors are not the only driving forces behind urban residence. Mobility has commonly been attributed to rural-urban income disparity, suggesting that urban residence holds certain relative attractions vis-à-vis rural areas.<sup>1354</sup> Urban attractions are not absolute, but are rather judged in the light of rural realities:

During the six years since Independence (...) we were not able to close the gap between urban and rural incomes. In fact, it is even wider today than it was when we started off on our own. This development does not encourage our young people to remain in the rural areas and take up farming as a career. The trend to go to the towns is increasing even if the people know that the chances of finding a job are very remote indeed.<sup>1355</sup>

Although employment could be difficult to obtain in town, especially from the late 1970s onwards, urban areas continued to hold relative attractions vis-à-vis rural areas.<sup>1356</sup> National income disparities were substantial in 1968. Whereas Zambian mineworkers earned K1300 a year and other wage earners K640, peasant farmer incomes were K145.<sup>1357</sup> In connection to this, it was stated that 'rapidly increasing prices for consumer goods and cost of production, on the one hand, and stagnant or even declining producer prices, on the other, make farming not a very attractive proposition.'<sup>1358</sup> The contrasts between rural and urban areas were posed in stark terms, of 'stagnation' as opposed to 'dynamism' or even 'tradition' versus 'modernity'.<sup>1359</sup> Although this 'dualism' might be lamented on occasion, it persists up to the present day in discourse and popular consciousness:

The most distressing aspect of Zambian society is its dual structure giving rise to the affluent and less well-to-do segments. This dualism cuts across the very fabric of our existence. On one side we have the monetised side of our economy with all the characteristics of dynamic temporal change based on modern technology. On the other side we have the so-called rural sector characterised by a low level of technology, economic performance and in fact painful poverty, ignorance and disease. The result of the yawning gap between the urban and rural areas in the standards of living is the exodus of able-bodied people from the rural countryside to the line-of-rail urban areas. This has led to further deterioration in the form of decreased output in rural areas and over-crowded shanty townships in urban areas.<sup>1360</sup>

Neither viewing rural and urban spheres as dichotomous, nor looking at economic dynamics alone can explain patterns of labour migration satisfactorily.

#### *Social connectivity and self-realisation: The socio-cultural dynamics of labour migration*

Far from being detached, rural and urban areas stand in relation to one another. Residence in urban areas is driven by rural realities and underpinned by a 'desire to improve the conditions of life in villages.'<sup>1361</sup> This is not merely an economic goal, but encompasses socio-cultural aspirations. Instead

---

<sup>1351</sup> Guyer, 'Wealth in people'.

<sup>1352</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 9.

<sup>1353</sup> Potts, 'Shall we go home?'; Jamal and Weeks, 'The vanishing rural-urban gap' deal with the 1980s and 1990s; Ferguson, 'Mobile workers' deals with the 1930s.

<sup>1354</sup> Heisler, *Urbanisation and the government of migration*; Jamal and Weeks, 'The vanishing rural-urban gap'.

<sup>1355</sup> (UNIPA) UNIP5/3/1/52, A New Strategy for Rural Development in Zambia, 1970.

<sup>1356</sup> Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'

<sup>1357</sup> (NAZ) Report of the Second National Convention on Rural Development: Incomes, Wages and Prices in Zambia, 12 December 1969.

<sup>1358</sup> (NAZ) A New Strategy for Rural Development in Zambia, 23 March 1970.

<sup>1359</sup> Ferguson, 'The country and the city', 80-92.

<sup>1360</sup> (UNIPA) UNIP1/2/12, Chairman of the Rural Development Committee, 22 September 1973.

<sup>1361</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 137.

of a transformative act involving geographical mobility and the breaking of bonds with a rural home, labour migration might more usefully be interpreted in terms of social connectivity.<sup>1362</sup> Rural and urban areas form a single network, as 'rural connections are presupposed in *starting* an urban career.'<sup>1363</sup> Social connectivity plays a role in enabling movement to town, establishing a career and attaining both rural and urban wealth and security.<sup>1364</sup> Social connectivity might be expressed through bonds of kinship and ethnicity, but equally through aspirations of self-realisation, all of which straddle the rural-urban divide.<sup>1365</sup> Labour migration is a 'lifestyle (...) inspired by aspirations that do not simply envisage material accumulation', but are premised on socio-cultural dispositions.<sup>1366</sup> Social connectivity plays a role in facilitating migration and securing its success, connecting rural and urban spheres.

Labour migration could be an integral part of building one's career.<sup>1367</sup> Work might be 'a positive aspect of human activity, and is expressed in the making of self and others in the course of everyday life.'<sup>1368</sup> Not wealth per se, but social standing is sought through labour migration. Self-realisation through labour migration 'involved a process, a succession of ordeals and achievements, a husbanding and protection of personal power and repeated manifestation of it.'<sup>1369</sup> Labour migration, however, is only one among many strategies towards self-realisation, including agricultural production, hunting and trade. As a result, there is a 'positive appreciation of diversity in life-style and personality type.'<sup>1370</sup> Far from being an individual pursuit, self-realisation is a thoroughly social undertaking.<sup>1371</sup> One could only make a name for oneself in relation to others, as Turner explains:

a man can acquire wealth by working in the White economy as a wage labourer (...) It seems often (...) to be the aim of returned labour-migrants (...) to obtain influence, and subsequently office, in traditional villages. Many of them see the village as their ultimate home, and regard their wage-labour as a means of acquiring the wealth that will give them prestige in the village sphere.<sup>1372</sup>

Even if labour migration involved physical mobility and (temporary) movement away from the village, it could be a means to acquire wealth and influence within the village, by becoming a 'Big Man' and building wealth in people.<sup>1373</sup>

Labour migration is not rooted in absolute rural poverty, but is driven by a desire to prosper in rural areas. In this sense, it becomes a strategy towards self-realisation.<sup>1374</sup> Colonial officials noted that: 'those at work are the younger, more energetic and more educated members of the population.'<sup>1375</sup> Indeed, 'it is not the poorest of the poor who migrate – they cannot afford it – but it is those with lower-middle incomes. Mobility is a privilege of the relatively wealthy.'<sup>1376</sup> Resources are required to migrate. Not only knowledge, skills and material wealth, but social capital and personality have to be cultivated.<sup>1377</sup> From application letters to the mines on the Copperbelt it becomes evident that workers

---

<sup>1362</sup> See: De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'; Van Binsbergen, 'Globalization and virtuality'.

<sup>1363</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 99.

<sup>1364</sup> Social connectivity has been acknowledged by numerous RLI scholars: H. Powdermaker, *Copper town: Changing Africa: The human situation on the Rhodesian Copperbelt* (New York etc., 1962); J.C. Mitchell, *The Kalela dance: Aspects of social relationships among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, 1956).

<sup>1365</sup> Especially: De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

<sup>1366</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 152; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1367</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 128.

<sup>1368</sup> Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant', 197.

<sup>1369</sup> Guyer, 'Wealth in people', 255.

<sup>1370</sup> Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge', 105.

<sup>1371</sup> De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; De Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars'.

<sup>1372</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*, 135.

<sup>1373</sup> See: Guyer, 'Wealth in people'; Miller, *Way of death*.

<sup>1374</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 151; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1375</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/966, C.J. Fryer, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 9 September 1958.

<sup>1376</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1350; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 16-22.

<sup>1377</sup> See: Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge'.

from Mwinilunga District had aspirations towards self-realisation, viewed as an inherently social achievement, involving family, kin and ideas of the nation:

I would like to develop myself and to be able to look after my family (...) I have learned that in the mines, there is security (...) it is one of the largest industries in Zambia which serves both the nation and neighbouring countries.<sup>1378</sup>

Another applicant wanted to become 'successful', wishing his 'career to grow into something which will make me support myself and the relatives who wants support. Also my studies to be continued so as to strengthen my career [*sic*].'<sup>1379</sup> A third applicant, who referred to himself as an 'unskilled person', stated that he wanted to be trained to help the company and the country. He continued: 'I like working very much because I can feed myself. I dislike to stay without working because I can't feed myself [*sic*].'<sup>1380</sup> Urban employment was not motivated by purely economic incentives, but was driven by aspirations of personal and social advancement. Such aspirations resulted in a diversity of strategies. Value could be composed from a multiplicity of sources: 'Adepts were many and varied, each pushing up against the outside limits of their own frontier of the known world, inventing new ways of configuring, storing and using what must have been an ever shifting spectrum of possibility.'<sup>1381</sup> Whereas some labour migrants sought short contracts so that they could return to their village to cultivate crops, others might stay in town for long periods of time to accumulate monetary wealth with which to set up a trading enterprise.<sup>1382</sup> Strategies towards self-realisation could be various, straddling the boundaries between rural and urban spheres. For the case of Mwinilunga, labour migration could be a strategy to build wealth and personhood, just as pineapple cultivation and hunting could be. Labour migration was 'shaped by local rural modes, conceptions and categories of wealth, accumulation, expenditure, physical and social reproduction and well-being which originate in (pre)colonial moral matrixes, attitudes, practices and beliefs.'<sup>1383</sup> Viewing labour migration through the prism of self-realisation might enhance an understanding of its underlying motives.

First of all, connecting labour migration to self-realisation places this form of mobility within its full societal context. Labour migration is not just propelled by an economic rationale, but builds upon socio-cultural dispositions, which are crucial to a proper understanding of the dynamics of mobility.<sup>1384</sup> Secondly, a focus on self-realisation enables the bridging of the discursive rural-urban divide.<sup>1385</sup> Even if some migrants might eventually sever ties with rural areas, urban residence is fundamentally driven by rural realities. Therefore it becomes crucial to look at rural-urban interconnections.<sup>1386</sup> Thirdly, this approach allows an understanding of the relative attractions of urban versus rural areas. Rather than resulting from rural poverty, labour migration is part of aspirations towards 'the good life', which might be located in either rural or urban areas.<sup>1387</sup> Most importantly, this approach does not stress the transformative aspects of labour migration, but suggests that the practice might have been constitutive of society in Mwinilunga District. In this sense, a focus on self-realisation can challenge the 'modernist narrative' of migration, which proposes linear historical trends

---

<sup>1378</sup> (ZCCM) Rabby Sameta, Mine No. 76934, Loc. Y4.9A, Born 29.8.1952, Entered Service 21.8.1972, Left Service 1.12.1972.

<sup>1379</sup> (ZCCM) Moses Kanjanja, Mine No. 82803, Loc. 18.1.5F, Born 18.08.1959, Entered Service 15.05.1979, Left Service 31.10.1992.

<sup>1380</sup> (ZCCM) G. Sameta, Mine No. 80106, Loc. 16.4.2A, Born 15.2.1956, Entered Service 30.6.1975, Left Service 31.8.1994.

<sup>1381</sup> Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge', 93.

<sup>1382</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Turner, 'Money economy'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1383</sup> De Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars', 779-80.

<sup>1384</sup> See: Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

<sup>1385</sup> See: Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'.

<sup>1386</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1387</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'.

and ruptures.<sup>1388</sup> Instead of stressing geographical mobility or radical change, labour migration should be placed within the broader context of social connectivity.

Straddling the boundary between rural and urban spheres, 'social security has to be situated in migrants' networks.'<sup>1389</sup> Ultimately, 'urban-based social relations do not replace migrants' rural-based social relations but, rather, the former are 'added to' migrants' social relations that span both urban and rural spaces.'<sup>1390</sup> Social contacts play an important role in creating networks of employment. Kin or people from a particular chiefdom might work for the same employer in town, and could sometimes arrange jobs for their relatives and friends back home.<sup>1391</sup> Migrant workers 'were obliged to construct their own system of social assistance' in an unfamiliar environment. This could be done by the expansion of ties of kinship into notions of ethnicity:

a society that accepted fictive kinship could easily extend this belief into a putative ethnicity built on the use of familial terms, such as "brother" or "uncle", to describe the relations between workers. Ethnicity, like kinship, was based on myths of origin, ascriptive and putative belonging, as well as relations of reciprocity.<sup>1392</sup>

Lunda workers did not develop a rigid or exclusive notion of ethnicity, but might use ethnic ties as resources in urban areas:<sup>1393</sup>

Migrants predominantly use kinship terminology when talking about their – multi-stranded – mutual social relations (...) However, it would be a mistake to label kinship as a determinant of the social organisation of migrant networks in town (...) Kinship (...) should be understood primarily as an idiom.<sup>1394</sup>

Real or imagined common origin could serve as a safety net in case of sickness, debt or other problems and in a more positive sense could help to gain access to favourable work postings or set up trading enterprises. Especially during the first visit to town a migrant would need a contact from the home area, irrespective of whether this was close or distant kin, real or fictive. Travellers would otherwise risk getting lost, but they also needed a place to stay and a contact to obtain a job.<sup>1395</sup> Kinship, identity and ethnicity could be instrumentalised as a resource which crossed the boundaries between rural and urban spheres.<sup>1396</sup> Socio-cultural dispositions thus played a role in enabling migration, by facilitating access to economic opportunities.

In spite of continued connections, colonial administrators expressed worries about 'detrribalisation', as ties of kinship might be severed as a result of prolonged residence in urban areas and a lack of contact with the village 'home'.<sup>1397</sup> Officials feared that 'detrribalisation' might lead to a loosening of morals due to lack of chiefly authority, or to rising costs of urban living if workers could no longer rely on rural areas for demographic and social reproduction.<sup>1398</sup> Indeed, some migrants moved to urban areas, married 'outsiders' and severed ties of Lunda identity:

The time comes, whether you like it or not, when there is a difference between town dwellers and country dwellers (...) It happens that men stay in towns all their lives; marry their wives there and have their children there and never return to their father's home (...) The expatriates [labour migrants] leave their dependants at home, and do not help their families by paying levy (...) Many of these people have families there [in Mwinilunga] or send their children to village schools for education, and use the dispensaries and hospitals there (...) They do not help their own areas and leave dependants behind in the care of the Native Authorities (...) as a consequence of the diminishing contact between Africans

---

<sup>1388</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1389</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 99.

<sup>1390</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 104.

<sup>1391</sup> Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 38-44.

<sup>1392</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*, 64.

<sup>1393</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Pritchett, *Friends for life*.

<sup>1394</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 103.

<sup>1395</sup> See: Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Englund, 'The village in the city'.

<sup>1396</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 388.

<sup>1397</sup> See: Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'; Chauncey, 'The locus of reproduction';

<sup>1398</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1344-5.

living in urban areas and their traditional authorities in rural areas, this must lead to a weakening of the bond between the two.<sup>1399</sup>

'Detribalisation' however, was a discursive construct. In practice, ties between rural and urban areas persisted, although their form could and did change over time. As this excerpt points out, labour migrants might send their children to schools or hospitals in Mwinilunga District, evidencing the enduring and complex ties between rural and urban areas.<sup>1400</sup> Even after years of living in town, rural links, social connectivity and group identity could be distinct resources:

There is an inevitable mingling of tribes on the Copperbelt. Urbanisation and tribal intermarriage combine to flatten out distinctive tribal organisations in a probably increasing number of individuals. But the great mass of population still retains its tribal connections and even in trade it is possible to associate the selling or trade in certain commodities with members of tribes to whom the commodity may be a familiar article at home, either by traditional or developed association.<sup>1401</sup>

The colonial state actively fostered rural identification in towns, for example through 'tribal representatives'. This form of late-colonial control originated from an alliance between chiefs and the administration. Tribal representatives would adjudicate in urban court cases on behalf of rural chiefs, in an attempt to counteract cultural, moral and ethnic disintegration in the urban environment.<sup>1402</sup> Furthermore, the current existence of Lunda cultural associations on the Copperbelt evidences that ethnic ties, far from fading in an urban environment, could be (re)imagined in a new setting.<sup>1403</sup> Social linkages could serve to make sense of opportunities and shape economic pathways, connecting rural and urban areas.<sup>1404</sup> Mobility, identity and economic opportunity proved interrelated:

The urban-rural connection in Africa is not a matter of 'either ... or'; it is not a connection which is either maintained or broken (...) It is clear that the connection is resilient, highly variable, with dynamics of its own, and not just dependent on personal choice. On the contrary, there seem to be structural reasons why it remains crucial in the struggle over access to resources and, increasingly, over the definition of citizenship.<sup>1405</sup>

Urban areas become attractive when seen in relation to rural realities. Within Mwinilunga District money-earning and employment options remained limited.<sup>1406</sup> Consequently, the disparity between rural and urban income levels propelled some to seek opportunities outside of their villages:

Money is very easy to earn and to spend in populated areas and few now think it worth while to labour on their own for small wages or benefit. These areas should be the granaries of settled areas. Instead they are becoming backwaters and depopulated areas. The native farmer, with the cost of transport, cannot possibly compete with wages which are given on the line [of rail], and the wives of natives now only judge their husbands by what they can provide for them in the way of clothes and a soft time.<sup>1407</sup>

Due to the lack of opportunities to sell crops locally and a general 'discontent with the prices paid for produce grown at home' some decided 'to give up agriculture and look for a job' in urban areas where employment appeared more lucrative or easier to obtain.<sup>1408</sup> In connection to this, 'the overwhelming majority of males now look to industry for an assured wage, and will not consider the alternative of improved farming with its heavy toil and uncertain returns and markets.'<sup>1409</sup> Nevertheless, agricultural

---

<sup>1399</sup> (NAZ) North Western Province African Provincial Council, April 1955.

<sup>1400</sup> Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'; Van Binsbergen, 'Globalization and virtuality'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1401</sup> (NAZ) W.V. Brelsford, *Copperbelt Markets – A Social and Economic Study*, 1947.

<sup>1402</sup> W.T. Kalusa, 'Death, Christianity, and African miners: Contesting indirect rule in the Zambian Copperbelt, 1935-1962', *International journal of African historical studies* 44:1 (2011), 99.

<sup>1403</sup> Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian rule*; Pritchett, *Friends for life*.

<sup>1404</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1405</sup> Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection', 315.

<sup>1406</sup> Turner, 'Money economy'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1407</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/955 H.B. Waugh, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 11 October 1940.

<sup>1408</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/137, F.R.G Phillips, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1954.

<sup>1409</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/102 Loc.4919, E.L. Button, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1960.

production was preferred to labour migration under certain conditions.<sup>1410</sup> In the area of Ntambu, where the soils are fertile and there is plenty of fish in the rivers, 'relatively few Mwinilunga natives go to work', because of the viable income-earning opportunities locally.<sup>1411</sup> Although 'household-level agricultural production' remained important, 'new demands – such as the need for cash to pay taxes and purchase newly available consumer goods – meant that such production was a necessary but no longer sufficient condition for material existence' and in this context labour migration became attractive.<sup>1412</sup> Building on older forms of mobility, labour migration was negotiated as a situational strategy to take advantage of and enhance existing opportunities.<sup>1413</sup>

The relative attractions of urban areas could be reinforced by aspirations towards self-realisation. Educated and skilled individuals who failed to find lucrative employment locally, would move to urban areas where opportunities were more readily available.<sup>1414</sup> Not all mission-educated individuals could obtain employment as teachers or orderlies within Mwinilunga District, and consequently large numbers would seek their luck on the Copperbelt or in the capital city Lusaka.<sup>1415</sup> Labour migration could be a strategy to build wealth and influence, a path towards self-realisation. Those most favourably positioned for this were not the least skilled or poorest individuals, but rather those who possessed skills and capital already.<sup>1416</sup> Individuals from the north-western part of the district, where there are relatively abundant income-earning opportunities due to the presence of a large mission, migrate more often and stay away for longer periods of time than individuals from other, more remote, parts of the district.<sup>1417</sup> Going against sedentary assumptions, 'development in areas of origin has usually been accompanied by increased migration', because 'as people get more opportunities to move, they take them up in ever larger numbers.'<sup>1418</sup>

Aspirations towards a 'good life' encompassed not only economic objectives, but ideology and culture as well. Next to income disparities, differences in the provision of services (health care, education and leisure) between town and country could be pronounced.<sup>1419</sup> The style of life in towns ('town life') attracted migrants. The 'bright lights' of the city acted as a magnet, and colonial officials concurred that 'it is only too easy to understand why the young and energetic want to leave the monotony of village life and see the excitements and wealth of the Copperbelt.'<sup>1420</sup> The 'beerhalls, tea rooms, and facilities for purchasing European food – all of which appeal to the village African', attracted workers from Mwinilunga District to the Copperbelt.<sup>1421</sup> Individuals consciously weighed terms of employment, conditions of service and other factors, before taking up urban residence, temporarily or for good.<sup>1422</sup> Individuals viewed urban and rural areas relationally, not as detached from one another. Relatively speaking in urban areas, when compared to the situation prevailing within Mwinilunga, wages were higher and employment opportunities more readily available. This opened avenues towards self-realisation and motivated numerous individuals to migrate. In this manner a mobile

---

<sup>1410</sup> See: Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

<sup>1411</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/12 Loc.4899, H.B. Waugh, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 11 October 1940.

<sup>1412</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 70.

<sup>1413</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves', 382.

<sup>1414</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; W.H.M.L. Hoppers, *Education in a rural society: Primary pupils and school leavers in Mwinilunga, Zambia* (The Hague, 1981).

<sup>1415</sup> Fisher and Hoyte, *Ndotolu*; W.T. Kalusa, 'A history of disease, missionary medicine and African medical auxiliaries in North-Western Zambia: The case of Mwinilunga District, 1893-1964' (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 2003).

<sup>1416</sup> Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge'.

<sup>1417</sup> See: Fisher and Hoyte, *Ndotolu*; Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1418</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1345, 1350.

<sup>1419</sup> Powdermaker, *Copper town*; Wilson, *An essay on the economics of detribalization*; Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

<sup>1420</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/966, C.J. Fryer, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 14 November 1958.

<sup>1421</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/957, A. Stockwell-Jones, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 30 January 1949.

<sup>1422</sup> Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

labour force was created, which sought to maximise existing opportunities and match these to personal preferences, whether these opportunities were in urban or rural areas.<sup>1423</sup> The strategy of labour migration was driven by rural realities and livelihoods, influencing these in turn. Labour migration has been connected to trends of rural development as well as underdevelopment.<sup>1424</sup> It is, therefore, pertinent to ask how labour migration influenced not only the livelihoods of migrants but also society within Mwinilunga.

### Decay or boom? Labour migration and local livelihoods

How has labour migration influenced the locality, livelihoods and sociality of Mwinilunga District? The impact of labour migration on the village setting has predominantly been analysed from an economic perspective. It has been suggested that labour migration would lead either to 'development' or to 'underdevelopment' and rural decay.<sup>1425</sup> If viewed within a 'modernist narrative', urbanisation, linked to industrialisation and modernisation, would release individuals from the strictures of village life, generating monetary income, wealth and 'development'.<sup>1426</sup> This positive association was acknowledged by officials from early on: 'Activities have increased in the industrial centres and the prosperity in these areas is reflected in the villages which supply the men who are employed in them.'<sup>1427</sup> Labour migration could be a strategy for people who are 'looking to improve their lives and move out of poverty'.<sup>1428</sup> Migration might generate remittances and an increase in human capital, ultimately benefitting the area of origin by raising standards of living.<sup>1429</sup> Nevertheless, the effect of migration on the development of areas of origin remains ambiguous.<sup>1430</sup> In a more negative way, labour migration has been connected to issues of proletarianisation.<sup>1431</sup> Whereas widespread rural poverty propelled individuals to earn money through labour migration, migration and waged employment could equally divorce workers from an independent means of production in the form of land, leading to proletarianisation. This process made workers increasingly dependent on the capitalist sector and aggravated the impoverishment of rural 'labour reserves', which had been depleted of the workforce needed to till the land, resulting in 'underdevelopment'.<sup>1432</sup> Scepticism about the effects of labour migration on village societies has been voiced not only by colonial and post-colonial officials, but by RLI scholars as well.<sup>1433</sup> Turner noted that 'changes brought about by the growing participation of Ndembu in the Rhodesian cash economy and an increased rate of labour migration, have in some areas (...) drastically reshaped some institutions and destroyed others.'<sup>1434</sup> Discourses of development and underdevelopment, stability and disruption, boom and decay all shared basic assumptions about the transformative effects of labour migration on rural societies.

Even though official policy encouraged labour migration as a means to earn tax money and engage in the capitalist economy,<sup>1435</sup> concerns were voiced against the practice. During the colonial period it was argued that 'the mines can't "have it both ways", that is have cheap labour and at the same time expect and abundance of cheap food from the villages which they have depopulated.'<sup>1436</sup> It

---

<sup>1423</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1424</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1425</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

<sup>1426</sup> Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 33; Cooper, *Struggle for the city*, 12.

<sup>1427</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/153, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1939.

<sup>1428</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1354.

<sup>1429</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 21.

<sup>1430</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 20.

<sup>1431</sup> See: Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'; Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective'.

<sup>1432</sup> Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'.

<sup>1433</sup> See Richards, *Land, labour and diet*, for 'rural decay'.

<sup>1434</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*, 17.

<sup>1435</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'; Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'.

<sup>1436</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol.2, E. Sharpe, Kasempa Province Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1930.

was feared that, under prevailing labour bottlenecks, urban and rural wealth could not coincide, because wage employment would jeopardise agricultural production. The male absenteeism due to outmigration and the supposedly deleterious effects this had on agricultural production and village make-up were cause for serious distress.<sup>1437</sup> Officials lamented that: 'there is a lack of men [who left for the mines] which seriously impairs the village labour force. I frequently met old men and hungry women and children in the same community as possessed miles of good but uncultivated land.'<sup>1438</sup> Labour migration could have negative effects on agricultural production:

It is becoming more and more evident that the exodus of youths and men from the villages, consequent upon the greatly increased demands for labour, is having a serious effect upon native agriculture (...) It has been reported, from certain districts, that the number of able-bodied men remaining in the villages is so small that the women have been compelled to cultivate old gardens in which the soil had become impoverished. The crops reaped have, naturally, been poor.<sup>1439</sup>

This might provoke a 'vicious circle', as 'it is not possible to develop an area if there are no able-bodied people there to do the work, and the people will not stay at home unless there is a means of obtaining a remunerative return for their labours.'<sup>1440</sup> It was observed that 'in the worst affected villages life just stagnates', and that 'there is a great tendency for the houses occupied by their [labour migrants'] wives to be allowed to fall into a very dilapidated condition.'<sup>1441</sup> Officials regarded the effects of labour migration on village life and agricultural production as potentially detrimental:

The greatest limiting factor is the progressive impoverishment of the villages with the drift to the Towns. It is idle to talk about social welfare and development here unless and until some bold and constructive means can be found and enforced to stop this drift. Over-industrialisation of the Territory, if at the cost of the rural districts, must in the long run prove extremely costly, if not disastrous (...) [Migrants] send no money, no clothes home, and the state of the village is most pitiable.<sup>1442</sup>

Policies of urban bias were blamed for rural decay, as high wages would attract disproportionate labour force from rural to urban areas.<sup>1443</sup> In order to lessen rural-urban income disparities official policy after independence aimed 'to raise productivity on as wide a front as is practical in order to (...) make rural life more attractive and thus curb the drift towards urban employment.'<sup>1444</sup>

Nevertheless, these views of rural decay, disruption or even breakdown do not seem to be in congruence with the increase in agricultural production and the boom in marketing throughout Mwinilunga District in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.<sup>1445</sup> In spite of the drain on village labour force due to high levels of outmigration, agricultural production flourished and rural life seemed to prosper. In recent years more cautious voices have suggested that migration to towns did not necessarily result in rural decay.<sup>1446</sup> In exceptional cases, rather, labour migration might have been compatible with high levels of agricultural production and rural prosperity, as the case of Mwinilunga District suggests.<sup>1447</sup> Whilst some officials complained about the lack of 'able bodied men' in the villages, others noted that notwithstanding high levels of absenteeism there were relatively few outward signs of disorganisation

---

<sup>1437</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 140-77; D. Potts, 'Worker-peasants and farmer-housewives in Africa: The debate about 'committed' farmers, access to land and agricultural production', *Journal of Southern African studies* 26:4 (2000), 807-32.

<sup>1438</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/959, K.J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, November 1951.

<sup>1439</sup> (NAZ) Northern Rhodesia Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1929.

<sup>1440</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/962, R.S. Thompson, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 16 September 1954.

<sup>1441</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/967, W.D. Grant, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 21 April 1959; (NAZ) NWP1/2/2 Loc.4897, C.M.N. White, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 7 December 1938.

<sup>1442</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/155, Western Province Annual Report, 1948.

<sup>1443</sup> Potts, 'Counter-urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?'; Jamal and Weeks, 'The vanishing rural-urban gap'.

<sup>1444</sup> (NAZ) Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture for the Year 1965.

<sup>1445</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

<sup>1446</sup> See: W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860-1930* (Cambridge etc., 1982); Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Pottier, *Migrants no more*.

<sup>1447</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 155.

in the villages.<sup>1448</sup> How can such radically opposing views, of labour migration leading to rural disruption, yet co-existing with prosperity and boom, be reconciled? Could labour migration, seen as a strategy towards self-realisation, be constitutive rather than transformative of rural life?

Viewing labour migration as a strategy towards self-realisation can bridge the rural-urban dichotomy at the basis of theories of both development and underdevelopment.<sup>1449</sup> If labour migration is interpreted as a social strategy for attaining wealth and power the focus lies not so much on the disruptive act of geographical mobility, but rather on the links which migrants create through a complex network of cultural, economic, social and political relations.<sup>1450</sup> Labour migration might lead to (permanent) urban residence, but is underpinned by rural realities, resulting in the 'simultaneous and overlapping presence of urban and rural spaces in migrants' lives.'<sup>1451</sup> Migrants 'often see their stay in town through the prism of their rural aspirations.'<sup>1452</sup> In an attempt to build one's career and establish personhood, avenues to enrichment might be sought in either rural or urban localities.<sup>1453</sup> Urban and rural opportunities have to be viewed relationally, as a variety of livelihood strategies might contribute to self-realisation. Because within Mwinilunga District opportunities to sell crops or engage in waged employment remained limited, individuals attempted to combine and complement existing livelihood strategies with labour migration. Thus, labour migration could function as a strategy to diversify and secure rural livelihoods.<sup>1454</sup>

Agricultural production and labour migration are often seen as conflicting or even mutually exclusive livelihood strategies, especially in terms of labour inputs.<sup>1455</sup> The case of Mwinilunga suggests, however, that it was not necessary to choose between agricultural production and labour migration. Rather, the two strategies could and often have been combined. Moreover, various livelihood patterns could positively feed into each other.<sup>1456</sup> Urban and rural strategies are often profoundly interlinked, and where possible workers would choose urban employment which would prove compatible with rural livelihood patterns.<sup>1457</sup> Labour migrants sought 'to sustain the viability of subsistence agricultural production and to maintain the freedom to enter the labor market on their own terms.'<sup>1458</sup> Insofar as possible, workers refused to engage in long labour contracts which would jeopardise the planting or harvesting of crops. Preferably, they engaged in shorter contracts which enabled a combination of agricultural production and waged employment.<sup>1459</sup> Even if more money could be earned farther afield, workers preferred to engage close to home so that they could combine cultivation and wage labour:

The Alunda is still fond of home life, and is usually unwilling to agree to work anywhere that will separate him from his family for a long period. He much prefers to earn 10/- a month at work near to his home; than 20/- a month amongst strangers.<sup>1460</sup>

Government commissioned road construction work within the district provided opportunities for such short-term contracts throughout the colonial period. Workers would be engaged per 'ticket' of four to six weeks, and they could terminate their employment upon the completion of any number of tickets. Road construction work proved popular for its flexibility. It enabled workers to return to their village

---

<sup>1448</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/959, K.J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, November 1951.

<sup>1449</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1450</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1347.

<sup>1451</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 142; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 84.

<sup>1452</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 153.

<sup>1453</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1454</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'; O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods'.

<sup>1455</sup> See: Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 122; Potts, 'Worker-peasants and farmer-housewives'.

<sup>1456</sup> See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1457</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1458</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours', 72.

<sup>1459</sup> See: Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries and contours'.

<sup>1460</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/1/4, F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 March 1921.

with cash in their pockets, but equally to engage in key agricultural tasks, such as tree-felling.<sup>1461</sup> In spite of labour commitments elsewhere, some individuals were able to go home and resume cultivation. In this manner, waged employment and agricultural production could go hand in hand.<sup>1462</sup>

Labour migration and agricultural production could also be combined as strategies due to the increasing adoption of cassava as a staple crop.<sup>1463</sup> Whereas sorghum and millet required the annual clearing of bush fields, which is a labour-intensive and typically male task, cassava could be cultivated on the same plot of land for up to twenty consecutive years. Through cassava cultivation the demand for male labour for field preparation was substantially reduced, enabling women to engage in agricultural production relatively independently.<sup>1464</sup> The adoption of cassava curbed the negative effects of 'male absenteeism', which colonial officials portrayed as deleterious to village life and agricultural production.<sup>1465</sup> Cassava, thus, facilitated male labour migration:

In areas such as Mwinilunga (...) where a form of "Chitemeni" agricultural is practiced an absence of more than two years on the part of the man has a serious effect upon the food supply of his family since it is the man's work to fell the trees and gather the branches, in the ashes of which the finger millet or kaffir corn is planted (...) where cassava is the staple crop and agriculture is largely stabilised, the presence of the man is unnecessary for the preparation of the gardens.<sup>1466</sup>

Due to cassava cultivation male labour migration could be combined with agricultural production by women within the village.<sup>1467</sup> Within the 'modernist narrative' labour migration is presented as an affair of lone men who leave their wives and children behind in the village, at least in the initial phases of circular migration.<sup>1468</sup> Such a scenario might indeed jeopardise agricultural production, but it does not appear warranted for the case of Mwinilunga District.

The young male migrant going to the mines by himself, whilst leaving his wife and children behind in the village, has been portrayed as the 'typical' pattern of early labour migration.<sup>1469</sup> If, however, labour migration is seen as a strategy towards self-realisation and as an inherently social form of mobility, this paradigm can be questioned. Self-realisation, rather than being an individual act, occurs in relation to others.<sup>1470</sup> Value and wealth are located in people and relationships, 'the self lived only in its interaction with others.'<sup>1471</sup> Consequently, self-realisation through labour migration could not be an individual pursuit, but would necessarily involve the household and the village. Men would not decide to go to work on their own, but their choices would be made relationally, in the context of social connectivity.<sup>1472</sup> Although some men did go to work alone, many took their families with them.<sup>1473</sup> Even though female migration remains poorly documented, women and children did move to towns. From the outset of the colonial period and increasingly after independence, women would

---

<sup>1461</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 149-53; Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*.

<sup>1462</sup> See: Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'; Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'.

<sup>1463</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 155-6; Berry, *No condition is permanent*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1464</sup> I. Peša, "Cassava is our chief": Negotiating identity, markets and the state through cassava in Mwinilunga, Zambia', in: J-B. Gewald, A. Leliveld and I. Peša (eds.), *Transforming innovations in Africa: Explorative studies on appropriation in African societies* (Leiden etc., 2012), 169-90; C.M. Chabatama, 'Peasant farming, the state, and food security in the North-Western Province of Zambia, 1902-1964' (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1999).

<sup>1465</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1466</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/154, F.M.N. Heath, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1947.

<sup>1467</sup> A. Spring and A. Hansen, *Women's agricultural work in rural Zambia: From valuation to subordination*, (Waltham, 1979).

<sup>1468</sup> Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; Potts, 'Worker-peasants and farmer-housewives'.

<sup>1469</sup> Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

<sup>1470</sup> De Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars'; De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

<sup>1471</sup> Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant', 198.

<sup>1472</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'.

<sup>1473</sup> Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'; Chauncey, 'The locus of reproduction'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

either accompany their husbands and relatives or move to urban areas of their own accord.<sup>1474</sup> Women found ingenious ways to circumvent restrictions on their movement:

the Government should inform the drivers of the buses that they should not carry women [to town] without permission from their husbands (...) although police, kapasu and district messenger patrols inspected the buses at Solwezi, Lumwana and Mwinilunga, it was difficult to catch offenders who usually caught the buses outside the town-ship by agreement with the drivers.<sup>1475</sup>

Even if women rarely initiated the movement to town themselves, they did not passively follow their husbands either.<sup>1476</sup> By the 1950s it was acknowledged that: 'an increasing number of unmarried, divorced and widowed women are leaving the rural areas to escape the drudgery of village life, to seek wealthy husbands in the Copperbelt or in the Belgian Congo.'<sup>1477</sup> Although formal employment opportunities were limited, women who accompanied their husbands to town would actively contribute to the family income.<sup>1478</sup> Women might engage in petty trade, for example in second-hand clothes or beans, or they might find employment as teachers or orderlies.<sup>1479</sup> Labour migration should therefore be seen as a household strategy. Young men might make the initial move to labour centres on their own, but they might return to the village to marry and thereafter take their wives to urban areas to settle there (semi-)permanently.<sup>1480</sup> Although the percentage of migrating men was probably always higher than the percentage of women, the disproportion was not as extreme as census figures suggest.<sup>1481</sup> The common portrait of women and old men being left in the village, without the necessary young male labour to cultivate the fields, is exaggerated.<sup>1482</sup> First of all, labour migration was meant to enhance rural security. Male decisions to migrate are made within the context of the household, with the interests of women and children in mind. Self-realisation could not be an individual pursuit of men, but was rather a household strategy. If married men migrated, they did not leave their wives behind, but sought to enhance their livelihoods. Secondly, aspirations towards self-realisation could result in the migration of families, rather than single men. This, in turn, could contribute to agricultural viability. If men, women and children moved to urban areas together, the gender imbalance in rural areas would not become extreme. A more equal gender balance would facilitate the continuation of agricultural production within Mwinilunga District and would minimise the effects of loss of labour force. Interpreting migration as a household strategy of social connectivity challenges views of rural breakdown.<sup>1483</sup> Remittances, the opportunity of schooling relatives in town, or assistance in obtaining employment, all contributed to rural diversification, rather than decay.<sup>1484</sup>

Census figures on labour migration should be questioned in the light of the culture of mobility in Mwinilunga.<sup>1485</sup> Throughout the 1950s censuses recorded male labour migration ratios exceeding 50%.<sup>1486</sup> These figures should not be taken at face value.<sup>1487</sup> Cases of people reported to be 'at work' while they were avoiding tax payment by hiding in the bush or by visiting relatives are ubiquitous.<sup>1488</sup>

---

<sup>1474</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

<sup>1475</sup> (NAZ) LGH5/1/3 Loc.3604, Lunda-Ndembo Native Authority Council, 5 November 1960.

<sup>1476</sup> Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

<sup>1477</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/962 R.S. Thompson, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 20 August 1954.

<sup>1478</sup> This view has been confirmed by numerous oral interviews, for example Mrs Lucy and Gladys, 6 February 2010, Kalulushi.

<sup>1479</sup> See: K.T. Hansen, *Keeping house in Lusaka* (New York etc., 1997); Confirmed by numerous interviews.

<sup>1480</sup> Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'.

<sup>1481</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

<sup>1482</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1483</sup> Potts, 'Worker-peasants and farmer-housewives'.

<sup>1484</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1485</sup> Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating'.

<sup>1486</sup> (NAZ) Mwinilunga District Annual Reports.

<sup>1487</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; B. Fetter (ed.), *Demography from scanty evidence: Central Africa in the colonial era* (Boulder etc., 1990).

<sup>1488</sup> This view is based on a wide reading of archival sources (NAZ).

The population found creative means to deceive the tax registrar, by using false names, claiming to have paid taxes across the border, etc.<sup>1489</sup> Furthermore, levels of residential mobility remained high throughout the twentieth century. In the 1950s Turner documented that a man could be born in one village, but might go to live with his maternal uncle in another village. He might move upon marriage, migrate to town and finally retire in the Boma.<sup>1490</sup> The tax registrar failed to grasp these multiple movements and, therefore, might have significantly overrepresented the percentage of men 'at work'.<sup>1491</sup> Moreover, census figures suggest a steady population increase during the twentieth century. Whereas population estimates for Mwinilunga District were as low as 10,866 in 1920, a total population of 81,496 was recorded in 1990.<sup>1492</sup> This increase might reflect revised census methods, immigration from Angola and Congo, as well as natural increase. Population increase might have compensated for male outmigration. Whereas labour migrants moved away from the district, others might have come in to compensate for the loss of labour force. Views of rural decay due to labour migration should therefore be reconsidered.

All too often, migration has been viewed negatively, as a last resort for impoverished agricultural producers who fail to find market outlets.<sup>1493</sup> Nevertheless, with a degree of sarcasm, colonial officials observed that:

The relative prosperity or backwardness of a chiefs area bears little relation to the number of labourers exported, but, the impression is gained that labourers from home areas with a lower standard of living have limited ambitions and are quite content to return home when they have saved a few pounds as a qualification for a long "rest".<sup>1494</sup>

The assumption that the poorest or the least educated, those deprived of all other opportunities, would be compelled to migrate by capitalist pressures does not hold. Rather, 'the poorest are generally excluded from migration opportunities. Migration presupposes a measure of relative well-being, which provides the material and ideological conditions for seeking new fortunes through spatial mobility.'<sup>1495</sup> Thus, contrary to what might be expected, areas where crops are difficult to market and employment opportunities are poor seem to send less migrants to urban areas, whereas more migrants originate from areas enjoying favourable educational and marketing opportunities.<sup>1496</sup> Migration is rooted 'not so much in the poor rural living conditions as in migrants' desire to prosper in the rural areas.'<sup>1497</sup> Labour migration should be seen as a strategy towards self-realisation, contributing to rural sustainability and prosperity, rather than leading to breakdown or decay. Labour migration allowed skilled individuals to enhance existing opportunities. Whereas some individuals focused on marketing pineapples within Mwinilunga District, others sought to develop personhood by building a career in urban areas. Agricultural production and labour migration did not conflict, but could coincide. Labour migrants might invest in agriculture upon return, or might facilitate the marketing of agricultural produce in urban areas. Labour migration did not cause rural decay or poverty, but could stimulate self-realisation and could thereby constitute the locality of Mwinilunga District.<sup>1498</sup>

In spite of high levels of outmigration from Mwinilunga District officials noticed 'comparatively little outward signs of disorganisation.'<sup>1499</sup> Labour migration could be an alternative or complementary strategy next to agricultural production, aiming to make rural life more secure. Waged employment

---

<sup>1489</sup> Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and contours'.

<sup>1490</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

<sup>1491</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1492</sup> See: (NAZ) Mwinilunga District Annual Reports; Central Statistical Office, Zambia, Census 1990.

<sup>1493</sup> Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; See: R.H. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London etc., 1977).

<sup>1494</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/37 Loc.4903, D.G. Clough, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>1495</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 139.

<sup>1496</sup> See: De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1497</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 151.

<sup>1498</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1499</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 December 1937.

did not necessarily have to be disruptive of agricultural production, but could contribute to its development through remittances and investment in agriculture made by returning labour migrants.<sup>1500</sup> Markets for agricultural produce were neither unlimited nor very stable in the area of Mwinilunga. Labour migration could serve to cushion the volatility of agricultural production and marketing, whilst providing additional income.<sup>1501</sup> Already during the colonial period officials acknowledged that the wealth of urban areas could spread into rural areas:

The prosperity in the urban areas was to a lesser degree felt in the rural areas where wages and ration allowances in lieu of rations in kind have shown a steady increase, while the demand for surplus native foodstuffs and fish has brought a considerable sum of money into African pockets in several districts.<sup>1502</sup>

Instead of a stark rural-urban dichotomy, rural and urban areas could more usefully be viewed as two sides of the same coin.<sup>1503</sup> By straddling the boundaries of both, individuals sought to maximise opportunities and increase livelihood security. There is a 'mutual dependence between urban and rural fortunes.'<sup>1504</sup> Therefore:

migration to town and the subsequent maintenance of rural connections are inseparable (...) social security arrangements have to be situated in migrants' networks, but those networks themselves cannot be reduced to a set of economically motivated links among migrants (...) [they have] to be understood in relation to their socio-cultural disposition.<sup>1505</sup>

How are rural and urban spheres interconnected through social connectivity, remittances and self-realisation?

Remittances in money and goods have been taken as a sign of enduring rural-urban connections.<sup>1506</sup> Interpreted within the same debates of development and underdevelopment, migrant remittances have overwhelmingly been judged for their economic importance.<sup>1507</sup> For the area of Mwinilunga, consequently, officials painted a grim picture, as migrants did not seem interested in remitting money. Generally, while migrants were in employment in urban areas remittances and contact with kin remained minimal.<sup>1508</sup> Long transport hauls and the difficulty of communication made that remittances tended to be infrequent and limited, as officials observed:

There was no evidence that the migrant workers, speaking generally sent much money home. Taxes were all paid in tikkies and pennies and sixpences, which I took to be the product of local trade, and not of postal orders sent from the towns.<sup>1509</sup>

Colonial officials lamented the loose ties between labour migrants and their kin in the villages, as 'they return seldom, and remit money and clothes never.'<sup>1510</sup> Remittances did not seem to be migrants' primary concern, as 'most natives who have savings appear to be more occupied with what use they can make of them on the spot than with safe and cheap methods of remitting money to their relatives.'<sup>1511</sup> Migrants tended to carry goods or money as gifts or investment capital upon their return, rather than remitting on a regular basis. Remittances, however, are but one form of rural-urban contact, which should be placed in a broader context.<sup>1512</sup>

---

<sup>1500</sup> Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 172-7; Pottier, *Migrants no more*.

<sup>1501</sup> Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1502</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/157, Western Province Annual Report, 1950.

<sup>1503</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1504</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 149.

<sup>1505</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 99.

<sup>1506</sup> Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'.

<sup>1507</sup> E. Obadare and W. Adebani, 'Transnational resource flow and the paradoxes of belonging: Redirecting the debate on transnationalism, remittances, state and citizenship in Africa', *Review of African political economy* 36:122 (2009), 499-517.

<sup>1508</sup> See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

<sup>1509</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/957, R.N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 6 March 1949.

<sup>1510</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/26 Loc.4901, R.N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 10 January 1949.

<sup>1511</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/151, Western Province Annual Report, 1937.

<sup>1512</sup> Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

Through labour migration and mobility rural and urban areas have become interconnected in numerous and enduring ways.<sup>1513</sup> Rather than marking rupture, migration might contribute to the constitution of society within Mwinilunga District. This could be expressed in the economic domain. Labour migrants could contribute to agricultural production in the form of investment in inputs, such as fertiliser, hoes, axes and the like.<sup>1514</sup> Concerns that labour migration might jeopardise agricultural production were voiced, because 'if people are away from their village for six months or more they cannot cultivate proper gardens.'<sup>1515</sup> Nevertheless, such concerns appeared unwarranted. To the contrary, if labour migrants invested their earnings in agricultural production upon return they might expand agricultural production and start marketing crops on a large scale. Numerous pineapple farmers used earnings from migrant labour as starting capital to buy suckers or to engage labour to prepare fields.<sup>1516</sup> Migrants earned cash incomes, which they could invest in productive enterprises in rural areas. Increased living standards could result from labour migration. In the 1950s, within the time span of five years, a colonial official observed a marked 'improvement' in material culture throughout Mwinilunga: 'Dresses, clothes were better, there were more bicycles, more Kimberley brick houses, lamps, suitcases, blankets etc. all seemed to have improved.'<sup>1517</sup> Rather than sending remittances, labour migrants would 'buy what few cloths they require' whilst working on the line of rail where goods were cheaper than within Mwinilunga. These goods might subsequently be transported to rural areas once the workers had finished their contracts.<sup>1518</sup> If labour migrants returned to settle in Mwinilunga District, they would bring consumer goods and material wealth from urban areas with them.<sup>1519</sup> As a result, consumer goods such as clothes, pots and pans became widespread in the villages and demand for these goods equally increased. Once these goods came to be regarded as necessities, this could provide a further incentive towards labour migration.<sup>1520</sup> Labour migration might lead to increased levels of wealth, but this did not necessarily equal rural 'development'.<sup>1521</sup>

As the previous examples have shown, labour migration could enhance standards of living and security within the village, yet this did not simply generate a dynamic of economic growth. Although labour migration offered prospects of material gain, increased social status and a return to the village as a respectable 'Big Man', wealth and self-realisation equally entailed risks.<sup>1522</sup> Kabalabala embodies this sense of both opportunity and risk involved in labour migration:

Kabalabala was a man, living in the area of the Kabompo River, who possessed charms with which he could turn himself into a lion. People who walked long distances would get tired and rest along the road, where they might erect temporary camps or shelters to spend the night. Especially those who were returning from the towns to their villages could carry considerable possessions, purchased with urban wages and serving as gifts or items of exchange and use in the village. Kabalabala would come and chat with these people during the day, covertly making an inventory of their possessions. At night Kabalabala would transform himself into a lion, return to the camp of the travellers, steal all their belongings and kill one or more members of the travelling group. Clothing, pots, and other goods would be taken from the travellers by Kabalabala, who would sell these items for money. This made travelling to and from

---

<sup>1513</sup> Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

<sup>1514</sup> Turner, 'Money economy'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

<sup>1515</sup> (NAZ) KSE6/3/1, Mwinilunga Sub-District Indaba, 13 October 1916.

<sup>1516</sup> See Chapter 2; This view is based on numerous oral interviews, for example Mr Saipilinga Kahongo, 22 March 2010, Ikelenge.

<sup>1517</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/966, R.J. Short, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, July 1958.

<sup>1518</sup> (NAZ) F.V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1926.

<sup>1519</sup> See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Turner, 'Money economy'.

<sup>1520</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol.1, D.C. Hughes-Chamberlain, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 December 1929.

<sup>1521</sup> De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

<sup>1522</sup> Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant', explore the negative effects of labour migration.

town dangerous, because Kabalabala could not be killed by spears, axes or guns. Travellers not only risked losing their belongings, but might even die if attacked by Kabalabala.<sup>1523</sup>

Labour migration, in common with other forms of mobility, entailed opportunities, but also risks. Individuals travelling long distances could earn large amounts of money, acquire skills and bring home copious goods, but might equally be struck by adversity along the way. Labour migration could be a strategy towards self-realisation, but also entailed a loss of labour force within the village. Even if kin who remained behind in the village might benefit from migrant remittances, they would oftentimes make claims which a migrant could not meet, resulting in witchcraft accusations or narratives such as Kabalabala. Wealth is not merely economic, but also social. The outcome of labour migration might be 'the creation of wealth that can grow over time', but migrant wealth and success equally had to be translated into social status within the community, expressed through self-realisation and social connectivity.<sup>1524</sup> This demonstrates not only the closely intertwined nature of rural and urban realities, but suggests that rural-urban ties should be viewed not only in economic, but also in social, cultural and political terms.<sup>1525</sup>

Interpreting labour migration as a strategy towards self-realisation allows an understanding of rural-urban relationships in other than purely economic terms.<sup>1526</sup> Migrants have to 'cultivate not only their land but also their social relationships in their areas of origin.'<sup>1527</sup> A common assumption is that 'people's social security is *spatially* situated – in agricultural production in rural areas', hence the focus on remittances and ties to a 'home' area, 'whereas, in practice, such security is *socially* situated – in the rural-urban network.'<sup>1528</sup> Government officials on occasion credited migrant labourers as being agents of 'development'.<sup>1529</sup> One District Commissioner stated that: 'returning workers bring with them, as a rule, higher standards of housing and some ideas about gardening for pleasure.'<sup>1530</sup> Indeed, migrant labour could be a means of self-realisation which straddled rural-urban divides. Self-realisation might be seen as an 'act of fabrication. It yields value in the form of persons, things, and relations (...) relations and identities are potentialities to be realized and remade in the unceasing work of daily life.'<sup>1531</sup> Turner equally acknowledged how labour migration could contribute to self-realisation. Returning labour migrants might play a role in diversifying rural livelihoods or creating a conducive environment for enterprise, but this was always a social rather than an individual endeavour:

Remittances of money are sometimes sent home to relatives, but it is more usual for migrants to return with presents and distribute them among kin when they arrive at their villages. Many of the migrants purchase the standing-crop in gardens rather than wait for eighteen months for the cassava crop to mature. Some migrants are beginning to start small 'businesses' with their savings. Some buy sewing machines and set up as tailors, others start 'tea-rooms' on the motor roads, and others again become hawkers and small traders.<sup>1532</sup>

Urban and rural strategies are thus thoroughly intertwined. Labour migration is not driven by rural poverty, but by a desire to gain wealth and influence in either rural or urban areas, a desire towards self-realisation.<sup>1533</sup> Some returning migrants who had accumulated 'considerable savings' might become 'Big Men', if they deployed these savings to diversify agricultural livelihoods, engage in craft

---

<sup>1523</sup> Compilation from several interviews, especially Minas Kantumoya Kasolu Kachacha, 27 July 2010, Kanongesha, and Fred Mpenji, 3 August 2010, Kanongesha. For comparable cases of vampires on the Copperbelt, See: White, *Speaking with vampires*.

<sup>1524</sup> Cohen and Sirkeci, *Cultures of migration*, 31.

<sup>1525</sup> Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'.

<sup>1526</sup> See: Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

<sup>1527</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 147-8.

<sup>1528</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 107.

<sup>1529</sup> See: Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1530</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/967, R.J. Short, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, May 1959.

<sup>1531</sup> Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant', 196-7.

<sup>1532</sup> Turner, 'Money economy', 23.

<sup>1533</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 151.

production or trade.<sup>1534</sup> Material gain and improved living standards within the village were attributed to migrants' engagement in the flourishing urban economy:

Wages have been substantially increased, especially on the Mines and Railways (...) the African standard of living both in town and country has risen appreciably. A man and his family are better clothed and better nourished than they were even three years ago.<sup>1535</sup>

Returning labour migrants made a definite impact on village life, although officials feared that this would merely encourage further migration:

The return to the villages of people who have been working for numerous years on the Copperbelt, was most marked. Time will reveal what influence they will have on future labour movements (...) [Their stories] might be detrimental to efforts at stimulation of the production of an economic crop.<sup>1536</sup>

Labour migration created a pattern and established social relationships in both rural and urban areas: 'In practice, moving between town and country often becomes a way of life, with important social ties being established in both settings.'<sup>1537</sup>

Social connectivity gave rise to a variety of rural-urban ties. Whereas some migrants chose to uphold tight links with their kin back home, others severed connections and sought urban wealth or influence.<sup>1538</sup> A survey held in 1952 reveals that whereas some migrants retained homes in villages throughout Mwinilunga, others did not. The absence of a house and a field might have made the move to return to one's village of origin less probable for workers:

Where 12 adult males had residence in the village 4 others were away at work yet had houses in the village ready for their return, and another 3 were away at work having no house or garden in the village and maintaining contact only by mail or other means.<sup>1539</sup>

This survey further illustrates the precarious and flexible yet definite nature of rural-urban links created by migrant labourers during periods of employment in town:

A very considerable number of those who go away to work maintain contact by letter, but have no house or garden in the village. Most of those who go away, remain away for a number of years, but nearly always return eventually. The majority of men go away to the line at some stage during their lives (...) Those men who stay away longest nearly always have a valuable contribution to make to rural life on their return.<sup>1540</sup>

Urban residence was viewed through the prism of rural aspirations, and as a consequence social connectivity and aims of self-realisation become crucial for understanding labour migration. Labour migration was, therefore, not so much transformative, but constitutive of rural life in Mwinilunga:

The rural (...) is the key ideological domain in which migrants anchor their understandings of their aspirations and dilemmas. The domain of the rural, both as the object of moral imagination and as a geographical site, is constantly re-made in relation to what migrants achieve and fail to achieve during their stays in town.<sup>1541</sup>

Not all migrants chose to return to their village of origin, as some found opportunities in town more attractive, or were driven away from their village due to quarrels or witchcraft accusations. Others, perhaps, settled in villages where they had kin or friends, or settled in the Boma where employment opportunities, possibilities for trading and social amenities were more favourable than in villages.<sup>1542</sup> A sense of 'home' was thus fluid and inherently social:

For some migrants the homeland continues to be a truly rural environment; for others 'returning home' means extending an urban way of life in the district town nearest to a village one can call 'home'. Home-

---

<sup>1534</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/966, M.A. Hinds, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 22 September 1958.

<sup>1535</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/155, Western Province Annual Report, 1948

<sup>1536</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/957, A. Stockwell-Jones, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 30 January 1949.

<sup>1537</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 150.

<sup>1538</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*, 133-5.

<sup>1539</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/960, K.J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 23 September 1952.

<sup>1540</sup> (NAZ) SEC2/135, R.C. Denning, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1952.

<sup>1541</sup> Englund, 'The village in the city', 153.

<sup>1542</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Turner, 'Money economy'.

coming, as a concept, is moulded by the migrant's labour experience: the longer the period of absence, the greater the chance that 'home' is away from the village.<sup>1543</sup>

Due to flexible and negotiable ties of kinship, several residential options would usually be open to migrants, who retained rights to cultivate land even after protracted absence. In this manner, 'similar socio-cultural dispositions regulating (...) migrants' behaviour (...) may give rise to different urban [and rural] trajectories', as there are many alternative trajectories 'whereby positions of high status can be attained.'<sup>1544</sup> Labour migration could be one of these strategies whereby wealth and high status could be achieved, a strategy towards self-realisation which straddled the rural-urban divide.

Through labour migration urban and rural life have become closely interlinked, economically, socially and ideologically. Still, officials could be surprised 'to note in a District so close to the industrialised areas how very thoroughly most of those returned from work on the mines seemed to have been reabsorbed by their traditional environment.'<sup>1545</sup> This observation appears less puzzling, however, if rural and urban spheres are viewed as interrelated instead of detached or even opposing. Building on a culture of mobility in the area, as well as socio-cultural dispositions of self-realisation and social connectivity, labour migration emerged from within the setting of Mwinilunga District. Self-realisation among migrants 'constitutes a crucial part of the active capturing of the urban space, for it allows them to refashion the city (...) in their own terms, which are those of long-standing moralities, rooted in local pasts.'<sup>1546</sup> Rather than setting in motion a 'radical transformation' or marking an 'epochal divide', labour migration could embody continuity.<sup>1547</sup> Labour migration could be a strategy to realise aspirations, develop relationships and enhance status. There could be considerable variations in worker strategies, some planning to retire in rural areas, others choosing to remain in town indefinitely. These strategies, however, were all underpinned by a relative judgement of opportunities and risks, costs and benefits in both rural and urban areas. The motivation to move to urban areas was deeply rooted in rural realities within Mwinilunga District. In order to diversify or increase income, to spread risks or avert the limited and volatile nature of markets within Mwinilunga, movement to urban areas could be propelled. Urban life by no means signalled a rupture with rural existence. Connections remained manifold, expressed through remittances and return migration, but also through contact, consumer goods and capital investment.<sup>1548</sup> In town opportunities have been sought which are not available locally, but which might serve to enhance socio-economic and political relationships within the village. Labour migration could serve to uphold, but also question, gender relations, generational hierarchies and the acquisition of wealth, providing new resources for local negotiations and struggles, contributing to processes of generating meaning and culture.<sup>1549</sup> Labour migration has thus profoundly shaped the locality of Mwinilunga. By placing social connectivity at the centrepiece of understandings of labour migration it might be argued that 'the motive for migration was, perhaps (...) to seek alternative means of being local.'<sup>1550</sup>

## Conclusion

Labour migration emerged from within the culture of mobility in Mwinilunga District. The practice built on established notions of work and movement, whilst providing access to new opportunities. Labour migration could be a means of coping with circumstances within the village, a resource to realise aspirations through mobility. Although labour migration formed a powerful alternative to local livelihood strategies, such as agricultural production or hunting, various strategies were not mutually

---

<sup>1543</sup> Pottier, *Migrants no more*, 45.

<sup>1544</sup> Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 105.

<sup>1545</sup> (NAZ) NWP1/2/2 Loc.4897, A.F.C. Campbell, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 23 August 1937.

<sup>1546</sup> De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

<sup>1547</sup> Ngwane, 'Christmas time'.

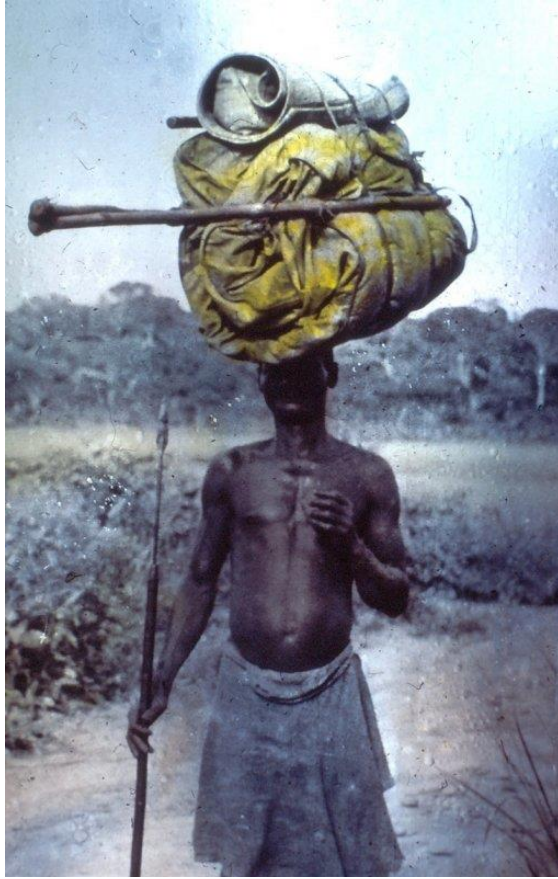
<sup>1548</sup> Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

<sup>1549</sup> See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

<sup>1550</sup> Ngwane, 'Christmas time', 689.

exclusive. Through social connectivity, migrants effectively straddled the rural-urban divide. Life histories make the enduring and complex connections between rural and urban areas apparent. Rather than leading to rural breakdown, labour migration could enhance the locality through self-realisation. Viewing labour migration through the prism of self-realisation can challenge the 'modernist narrative' which posits linear historical transitions, a rural-urban divide and proposes labour migration as a transformative act. Self-realisation, rather than stressing structural forces, emphasises creativity and agency. Studying life histories of migrants from Mwinilunga District challenges universal paradigms of migration, by pointing towards variety, flexibility and contestation. Labour migration built on local customs, aspirations and morals which fused into a hybrid work ethic. Pre-existing practices and ideologies proved remarkably resilient, guiding workers' entrance into the labour market through patterns of mobility. In the area of Mwinilunga, a mobile work force could negotiate work contracts according to their own preferences, using mobility as a tool for tax evasion or to avoid recruitment. Moreover, the hegemony of the state and capitalist interests could be subverted through movement. Labour migration could be a social strategy for attaining wealth and power, emphasising links, interconnections and relationships. Rather than stressing transformative change or a rural-urban divide, labour migration could serve to build personhood and constitute the locality of Mwinilunga.

Mobility, in the form of population movement, trade or labour migration, served to realise aspirations of secure and profitable livelihoods. Although agricultural production could provide a stable livelihood for some within Mwinilunga District, mobility could be a complementary livelihood strategy. Even if mobility could be a high risk undertaking, it equally held the promise of high profits. Mobility could provide access to markets, material gain and social standing and therefore remained a persistently attractive strategy to the inhabitants of Mwinilunga District. Continuity and change could go hand in hand, as mobility built on historical roots and a flexible 'culture of mobility', but simultaneously adapted to changing social, economic and political circumstances. Through mobility the inhabitants of Mwinilunga District could negotiate the global and the local, Zambia, Angola and Congo. Moreover, mobility could be an avenue towards consumption. Both labour migration and cross-border trade could be spurred by a desire to access items such as clothing, pots, pans and guns. Objects of consumption could themselves be mobile, only rarely being produced and consumed by a single person within a confined area. Consumer goods travelled through long-distance trade and international marketing. The relationship between production and consumption, the ways in which consumer goods and their circulation changed over time, and the meaning of goods within society will be at the centre of the following chapter.



3B.1: Porter carrying load  
Source: Dennis Brubacher



3B.2: Returned labour migrants  
Source: Betty Dening, Personal Collection