



SOUTHERN AFRICAN INSTITUTE  
*for* POLICY AND RESEARCH

## Occasional Papers Series

From the Local to the Global:

Tuesday Market as a Microcosm of Socio-economic Trends in  
Zambia

Jessica Achberger

25 February 2014

Occasional Paper #2014/01

## **Abstract**

In 1970, the Hindu women of Kamwala, the Indian neighborhood of Lusaka, Zambia, began a market in the hall of the local temple. Each Tuesday, women gathered to shop for various foodstuffs. Imported products were hard to come by in 1970, so the most popular product sold was coriander – a way to create dishes that seemed familiar. Over 40 years later, the Hindu women still come to Tuesday Market to go shopping. The market has changed significantly over the years – growing in size, changing locations, and increasing the range of available products. Different races and socio-economic classes of people living in Zambia visit the market for quality products at good prices in a bustling, but moderately calm, market atmosphere. In the past several years, however, the market's face has changed significantly, reflecting broader socio-economic changes within Zambia. Increasingly, Chinese customers frequent the market, often early in the morning, to purchase Chinese foodstuffs, such as tofu and bok choy, from Chinese vendors.

This paper explores the changing face of Tuesday Market, in particular asking how these changes are perceived by vendors and consumers who have a long-standing relationship with the marketplace. The Chinese presence in the market represents not only an illustrative example of an appropriation of space, but also questions of competition in the Zambian economy, changing consumption patterns, and market value chains. Focusing on in-situ ethnographic interviews conducted over the past 9-months, this study acts as a way of describing broader socio-economic changes in Zambia.

## Introduction

As the sky becomes a deep purple and the sun just begins to peek over the horizon, I drive down the almost empty streets surrounding the government offices in Ridgeway. Pulling through a gate and into a car park, as the sky becomes lighter and lighter, it becomes clear I am far from the first person awake. The market is already full of life, with farmers unloading trucks of fruit and vegetables and vendors beginning to settle into their stalls. At just shy of five-thirty in the morning, I am still guzzling coffee from my mug and trying to shake off sleep. But the vendors who have arrived before me began their journeys even earlier, sometimes as early as two in the morning, and they will be here all day, until after the market officially closes at eight in the evening. Market day has come again.

This paper looks at the preliminary findings of a long-term study of a popular market in Zambia's capital city of Lusaka. "Tuesday Market" takes place weekly at St. Peter's Anglican Church, around the corner from the University Teaching Hospital, in an open air pavilion. However, Tuesday Market is not just a great place to stock up on fruit, vegetables, spices, and garden plants; it is also reflective of larger socio-economic changes that are taking place within Zambia.

The stories of the farmers, vendors, and consumers highlight a myriad of social and economic issues on both a macro and micro level. For this paper, I have chosen to highlight three specific trends reflected in the microcosm of the marketplace. Specifically, I present initial findings on the long-standing role of Indian consumers (both Hindu and Muslim, and particularly women) and how vendors have worked to cater to this specific demographic. I then compare Indian consumers with the growing presence of Chinese consumers in the Market – as both the "old" Asians and the "new" Asians utilise this space differently. Each

stall owner also tells a story of entrepreneurship in Zambia and the socio-economic conditions that make such an enterprise possible, although at differing levels. Within this, the source of the goods, particularly those catering to the Asian consumers, exhibits an increasingly globalised marketplace in Zambia.

The paper is organised as follows. I first provide background on the Market, followed by my research methodology. I then present my findings, as described above. I conclude by explaining how these trends are reflective of socio-economic conditions in Zambia as a whole, as well as pointing to future areas of research.

## **Research Methodology**

I was first introduced to the market as a consumer three years ago, when I moved permanently to Lusaka. Through shopping in the market on a weekly basis, I developed relationships with stall owners and a particular affinity for patronizing certain individuals for certain items (everyone has their favourite fruit lady). However, it was not until recently that I began to more critically observe how the market more broadly reflects Zambian socio-economic trends, and I began to ask questions. This concept of the everyday life has long been popular in anthropological fieldwork. As Jenkins (1994) describes, “an exploration of the idea of 'acquiring habits for action' through fieldwork, or apprenticeship, and its congruence with the practices of everyday life...has implications that impinge upon discussions of ethnographic method, ethnographic writing and the status of anthropological knowledge”. However, for this study, I began rather with the participation, before moving onto the observation, in a form of the “observation of participation” expounded upon by Tedlock (1991). Therefore, I came at this project organically,

developing my research questions from my experience, rather than seeking out experiences to answer my questions. However, despite having already built up relationships with my major informants, I have only slowly begun to seek answers to my questions.

Studies of markets in Zambia remain limited, but they are expanding, particularly as concerns the Chinese presence in Zambia (Chatelard and Chu, Personal Communication). Work has been previously done on other sectors, including salaula, or secondhand clothing, by Karen Hansen (2000), as well as older studies of Matero Market, conducted by Oberschall (1972), who continued the work conducted by Nyirenda (1957) and Miracle (1972). Aside from the Matero study, longitudinal studies of this nature have been limited as concerns markets in Zambia. The validity of such work in Zambia has been made more than apparent, however, particularly in the work of Elizabeth Colson and subsequent generations of Tonga researchers (e.g. 1995, 2007a, 2007b).

My intention is for this project to be longitudinal in nature, moving with the market, continuing to develop relationships, and noting changes over time. Thus far, I have focused on ethnographic data, as well as historical qualitative data in gaining a greater background on the market and its diverse community (e.g. Swetnam, 1978; Holloway & Kneafsy, 2002). Quantitative data at this point is limited to approximate figures of sales and amounts sold, described by vendors in informal in situ interviews conducted at the market.

## **Background**

The Market is, as markets usually are, a prime example of organised chaos. However, unlike the large and difficult market of Soweto or the unregulated market in Northmead,

Tuesday Market is small, well-managed, and efficient. The market began at the Hindi pavilion, in Kamwala. The “Tuesday Market” was, at its founding, essentially an Indian market, catering to the Hindu and Muslim women who lived, and still do in large part, in Kamwala. From the Hindi Pavilion, the market moved to the YMCA, next door to its current home in St. Peter’s Anglican Church, where it moved in 2000. The movement of the market largely reflects issues with Lusaka City Council, and it is in fact set to move again, but negotiations have delayed the process that was supposed to take place this year (Bhatia, Personal Communication).

In 2006, the vendors, who had already been cooperating to make the market such a huge success, decided to form a cooperative association. This association meets regularly, charges annual fees, and regulates both the economic and social controls of the marketplace (Mwale, Personal Communication). What is most interesting is the level to which the regular vendors, particularly those of larger stalls with greater capital investment, seem to care deeply about the market on a much more personal level. Despite the fact they are essentially competition to one another, stall owners have repeatedly expressed their respect and appreciation for fellow vendors, and expressed profusely that “we leave our politics at the door” (Bhatia, Personal Communication). Even on Election Day in 2011, the market remained peaceful, even though many vendors felt strongly about their party affiliation (Bhatia, Personal Communication).

The market itself seems compact and manageable, set-up in the multi-purpose open air pavilion built by St. Peter’s to house church events, such as the women’s brigade. However, St. Peter’s, as many others do in Lusaka, where rentals are high, decided to rent the pavilion to the market for rental income. Each stall at the market is rented for a different daily price,

in addition to yearly membership fees for the cooperative, ranging from 20 kwacha per day to 65 kwacha per day (approximately US\$4 to US\$13), depending on the size of the stall and the type of goods sold (Mwale, Personal Communication). The cheapest stalls are vegetable stalls, followed by fruit, garden plants, and spices. Outside the pavilion, there are additional stalls selling dried fish, live poultry (including chickens, ducks, and quail), salaula (secondhand clothing), and obviously donated children's goods, such as toys, books, crayons, and tiny toothbrushes. The most popular goods are rice, potatoes, and onions, for which 8-10 tons of each are sold weekly.

## **Preliminary Research Findings**

What is described below represents my preliminary research findings, after three months of research in the market. These three trends are reflective of the largest socio-economic changes apparent in the marketplace, and they represent those that are best in helping us also understand the changing nature of trade in Zambia more generally speaking.

### *The Indian Community in Zambia*

As the market began amongst the Hindu community of Kamwala, it has always maintained a large Indian presence, particularly in the women, both Hindu and Muslim, who frequent the market. As such, vendors have worked to cater to this community, and there are a number of stalls dedicated to spices, dried fruit and nuts, dried beans and lentils, and other Indian goods, such as acha, imported spice packs, papadoms, and incense. Much work has been done on the Indian community in Zambia (Phiri, 2000; Mfuzi, 2000;

Haig, 2013). Yet the Indian community in Zambia has always been dynamic, and changes in that community are reflected in the changing nature of the marketplace, which is why additional studies will continue to remain necessary.

Not all vendors catering to the Indian customer are Indian themselves, but Mukesh Bhatia is an exception. Bhatia came to Zambia in 1989 as a child, and he has been selling at the market since the Kamwala days, for approximately 15 years. Bhatia's family is, like many Indian families in Zambia, involved in a number of enterprises. His family owns and operates the spice and dry goods business (sold exclusively at Tuesday Market), a pharmacy off Cairo Road, a fireworks and children's party toys import business, and a farm. In the beginning, Bhatia simply sent an employee to run his stall at the market, but he now sits there every Tuesday himself, from early in the morning until late in the evening. The concern of theft is high in the market, and most vendors choose to operate their stalls themselves (Bhatia, Personal Communication).

Bhatia's goods come in large part from India, as well as locally, depending on the quality of the product, and price, desired. As Bhatia explained to me, the clientele in the market is so diverse, ranging from the very poor to the embassy community, and everything in between, that vendors must work to cater to as large of a cross-section of the market as possible. For instance, as mentioned above, rice is a particularly large seller in the market. Bhatia keeps several kinds of rice in stock, including Mongu rice locally from Zambia, and other cheaper varieties from Malawi and Tanzania, as well as more expensive rice from Myanmar, Thailand, and Canada, for the portion of his customer base that wants quality short grain basmati rice (Bhatia, Personal Communication).



As one of the larger vendors at the market, with one of the highest capital needs (spices are by far the most capital intensive product sold in the market), Bhatia is not just running a stall, but rather a large, profitable business. Each week, he turns over between 25,000 and 40,000 kwacha of product (between US\$5-8,000), and he makes a net profit of between 5,000 and 15,000 kwacha, or between US\$1,000 to 3,000. This sort of turnover is significant, and reflects a large, diverse community within Lusaka, as well as a particularly large and well-appointed Indian community, available to buy foodstuffs, with the desire to buy them in the local marketplace, rather than a large shopping mall.

### *The Growing Chinese Presence in Zambia*

Despite the continued presence of the Indian community at the market, there is also a growing Chinese presence, met with a variety of emotions from those involved in the market community. Mr. Mwale, the St. Peter's administrator, has attended the church since 2001, before coming out of retirement to work eleven months ago. Previously just a "client" of the market, Mr. Mwale has taken over as the landlord for the market cooperative and has therefore been witness to many changes in the marketplace. In particular, he notes the increasing Chinese presence as changing the look and feel of the market, but he does not feel that is it necessarily a bad thing (Mwale, Personal Communication). He and his colleagues at St. Peters, who do not rely on the market for income, seem to watch the growth of the Chinese presence out of curious amusement, rather than criticism.

However, others, such as Bhatia, are watching the changes in the market closely. Bhatia notes that the market as a whole has grown enormously in the past several years, as much as 40-50 percent in sales, number of customer, and the consequent increase in vendors. He

observes that this growth has been in the Asian community broadly speaking, including amongst new Indians that have just moved to Zambia, but particularly amongst the Chinese community (Bhatia, Personal Communication).

It was the growth of the Chinese presence in the market that first attracted my attention, as there were, three years ago, no visible Chinese vendors or customers. It appeared from outside observation that the customers came first, and then the market changed to reflect the changing population of clientele. While that is in large part true, there has been a Chinese vendor, a local farmer, who has held the stall next to Bhatia for five years, selling Zambian vegetables from his farm with a Zambian employee to sell the goods (Bhatia, Personal Communication). Yet, while you still do not see him at his stall selling, his goods have changed to cater to the Chinese customers. Other Asian vendors have also come and gone, including a Pilipino woman and a Chinese women, but these have been the exception, rather than the rule.

The scene now is completely different, particularly if you arrive at the market early, before eight in the morning. From five o'clock until eight o'clock the front of the market is a vibrant mini-market of Chinese vendors, Chinese goods, and Chinese customers. Tofu, bok choy, Shitake mushrooms, and other distinctly Chinese products, new to Zambia, are sold en masse, until they run out. To visit the market at lunchtime one would be led to believe that there is only a small Chinese presence in this particular setting, but it is only because the best goods are already gone, and the Chinese who bartered for them working on their farms, home, or cooking at local restaurants. For those early morning hours, to stand amongst the vendors yelling in rough, rural Mandarin, to watch the half dozen kinds of tofu cut and put into bags, and to see men walking around with chickens slung over their back,

you feel as if you have left Zambia and have been transported to China – a truly phenomenal appropriation of a space.

Zambian vendors watch these developments warily, however, as the Chinese vendors represent competition, rather than collaboration. Chinese vendors buy from Chinese farmers, and Chinese customers in large part purchase only these goods. This patronization completely leaves Zambians, including those of Indian origin, out of the market chain. Concern over Chinese competition in Tuesday Market is a microcosm of a larger concern held by many in Zambia over the growing Chinese population throughout the country in all sectors.

### *Entrepreneurship and the Informal Economy*

Killian is a young Zambian man who sells spices, beans, and other dried goods in one of the largest stalls in the market. Killian represents the market's greatest example of youth entrepreneurship. Youth entrepreneurship in the urban areas has also been explored by Hansen (2010), particularly in relation to the informal marketplace. However, like Bhatia, Killian exists in the formal marketplace, running a Zambian registered company, which means he also pays the 65 kwacha per week for each of his stalls. Overall though, most of the vendors exist in the informal marketplace, and include mostly poor, urban women who purchase their vegetables each Tuesday directly from farmers or from middlemen in markets like Soweto (e.g. Hansen, 1980).

Killian's dry goods business covers not one, but two stalls at Tuesday Market, and he sells the goods to wholesale to shops during the rest of the week. He employs six other young men full time, including his brother, who operates the second stall. He is a strict

employer, constantly watching his staff, including his brother, and keeping copious records of the exact number of kilos that go to the second stall with his portable digital scale. While his stock is large, his other costs remain low, as he keeps his stock at his home and rents a canter truck for 200ZMK (approximately US\$40) each Tuesday to transport the goods to and from the market (Killian, Personal Communication).

Killian has been with the market for several years, since it was at the YMCA, catering in large part to the original Indian customers, who come to him for everything from sultanas to turmeric, and dried lentils to almonds. Unlike Mukesh, his goods come almost solely from South Africa. He acknowledges that goods can be easier and cheaper when purchased from Dar es Salaam, but that he believes the goods to be of higher quality when purchased in South Africa (Killian, Personal Communication).

For entrepreneurs like Killian, a greater capital investment means being able to sell a variety of high cost goods that appeal to a broad market. The further away the value chain of goods, the higher the initial capital necessary. Along these lines, stall prices reflect not only the size of the stall, but the origin of the goods. Spices and other dried goods - also do to their long shelf-life - come from as far away as Southeast Asia. Fruits generally come from South Africa and include apples, pears, and naartjies, as well as local fruits such as pineapple and papaya. And by the far the largest segment of the vendor population sell local vegetables, a population which consists of almost entirely poor, urban women, all existing in the informal marketplace.

## Conclusions

Despite the limited period of study on Tuesday Market thus far, the socio-economic trends and changes that it reflects are very clearly defined. Social and economic change in Zambia, particularly in an urban area such as Lusaka, is immediately and directly reflected in consumption patterns, perhaps more quickly than in any other area. A market such as Tuesday Market exists as an easily studied microcosm of these broader consumption patterns. From an Indian market to an increasingly Chinese one, and one that reflects the increasingly global nature of Zambian trade in goods, the market touches on key issues related to migration, cultural adaptation and interpretation, globalization, entrepreneurship, competition, poverty, and even food security.

A longer term study of the market will allow each of these areas to be studied in greater depth, through the continuation of narrative ethnographic research, as well as quantitative and qualitative expansions. My next steps are to first develop stronger relationships with Chinese farmers, vendors, and consumers, who, because of the nature of the marketplace and their perceived role in it, have thus far only maintained relationships with me at a very superficial level. I would also like to speak further to the Indian consumers, particularly those who have frequented the market through its different locales over the years. Further qualitative work also remains to be done amongst the vendors who exist in the informal marketplace, and the following-up of the value chains of the goods they sell, which largely come from local production. Finally, I also intend to expand the study quantitatively, by comparing the ethnicity of vendors/consumers over time (ie: surveys taken twice per year) and obtaining more accurate records of the total gross and net profit of vendors each Tuesday.

## References

- Clark, Sam, Elizabeth Colson, James Lee, and Thayer Scudder. 1995. "Ten Thousand Tonga: A Longitudinal Anthropological Study from Southern Zambia, 1956–1991". *Population Studies* 49 (1):91-109.
- Cliggett, Lisa, Elizabeth Colson, Rodrick Hay, Thayer Scudder, and Jon Unruh. 2007a. "Chronic Uncertainty and Momentary Opportunity: A Half Century of Adaptation among Zambia's Gwembe Tonga". *Human Ecology*. 35 (1): 19-31.
- Colson, Elizabeth. 2007b. *Tonga Religious Life in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Bookworld Publishers.
- Glennie, Paul D., and Nigel J. Thrift. 1993. "Modern Consumption: Theorising Commodities and Consumers". *Environment and Planning D. Society and Space*. 11:603-606.
- Haig, Joan. 2013. "The Hindu Minority in Lusaka, Zambia: Three Challenges of Ethnographic Research". *SAGE Cases in Methodology*.
- Hansen, Karen Tranberg. 1980. "The Urban Informal Sector as a Development Issue: Poor Women and Work in Lusaka, Zambia". *Urban Anthropology* 9:199-225.
- Hansen, Karen Tranberg. 2000. *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hansen, Karen Tranberg. 2010. "Changing Youth Dynamics in Lusaka's Informal Economy in the Context of Economic Liberalization". *African Studies Quarterly* 11 (2/3).
- Hichaambwa, Munguzwe, and David Tschirley. 2006. "Zambia Horticultural Rapid Appraisal: Understanding the Domestic Value Chains of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables". Working Paper No. 17. Food Security Research Project, Lusaka, Zambia.
- Holloway, Lewis, and Moya Kneafsy. 2002. "Reading from the Space of the Farmer's Market: A Case Study from the United Kingdom". *Sociologia Ruralis* 40 (3):285-299.
- Jackson, Peter. 1983. "Principles and Problems of Participant Observation". *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 65 (1):39-46.
- James, Jeffrey. 1992. *Consumption and Development*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Jenkins, Timothy. 1994. "Fieldwork and the Perception of Everyday Life". *Man*, 29 (2):433-455.
- Jules-Rosette, Bennetta. 1979. "Alternative Urban Adaptations: Zambian Cottage Industries as Sources of Social and Economic Innovations". *Human Organization* 18 (3):389-408.

- Mfuzi, Friday. 2000. "Indian Traders in Livingstone". M.A. Dissertation, University of Zambia.
- Miracle, Marvin. 1972. "Apparent Changes in the Structure of Africa Commerce: Lusaka, 1954-1959". *The Northern Rhodesia Journal* 5 (2):170-175.
- Nyirenda, A. A. 1957. "African Market Vendors in Lusaka". *The Rhodes Livingstone Journal* 22:31-63.
- Oberschall, Anthony. "Lusaka Market Vendors: Then and Now". *Urban Anthropology* 1 (1):107-123.
- Phiri, Biseck J. 2000. *A History of Indians in Eastern Province in Zambia*. Lusaka.
- Swetnam, John J. 1978. "Interaction Between Urban and Rural Residents in a Guatemalan Marketplace". *Urban Anthropology* 7 (2):137-153.
- Tedlock, Barbara. 1991. "From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography". *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47 (1):69-94.
- Tschirley, David, and Munguzwe Hichaambwa. 2010. "The Structure and Behavior of Vegetable Markets Serving Lusaka: Main Report". Working Paper No. 46. Food Security Research Project, Lusaka, Zambia.

## Appendix A



## Appendix B