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On Counting, Consumption, and Labour: Writing Histories of Central Africa

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This special issue of the *Zambia Social Science Journal* is the product of the fifth CART conference, held in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands, from 28-29 November 2013. Beginning in 2005, the research programme *From Muskets to Nokias: Technology, Consumption and Social Change in Central Africa from Pre-Colonial Times to the Present* (Leiden University and partners) has facilitated five Central African Research Themes (CART) conferences in the Netherlands and in Zambia. These conferences highlighted research being carried out by researchers associated with the programme, and provided a forum within which researchers could debate and discuss their findings and on-going research intentions. During the final conference in November 2013, the varied research endeavours of the programme were presented and an attempt was made to provide a preliminary synthesis of the programme's findings.

The final conference was entitled 'Muskets to Nokias: Towards a History of Consumption, Migration, and Power in Central Africa, 1500-1973'. Topics of the presented papers ranged from local vegetable market dynamics in Lusaka (Jessica Achberger), a history of Solwezi focusing on women, HIV-AIDS and faith (Felix Kaputu), the migration of women in Katanga (Donatien Dibwe), Mambwe labour migrants (Webby Kalikiti), Valentine Musakanya's career (Marja Hinfelaar), David Livingstone and Sekeletu (Walima Kalusa), Msiri and Bunkeya (Pierre Kalenga), weapons under Kaunda (Andy DeRoche), and Methodism in rural Katanga (Jeffrey Hoover), to witchcraft paraphernalia in the Livingstone Museum (Friday Mufuzi).

From this variety of papers, three have been reworked and are presented in this special issue: the first paper is on household budget research in Central Africa (Robert Ross), followed by a paper on the interrelationship between the Zambian and the Congolese Copperbelts (Enid Guene), and a paper on labour migration from Mwinilunga District (Iva Peša).

The research projects associated with the 'From Muskets to Nokias' programme aimed to offer a new reading of the history of the region through the lenses of technology and consumption, and their changing relations to social organisation. The programme's basic intellectual premise was that the introduction of industrial technology to the Copperbelts of Zambia and the Congo brought about a number of radical and interrelated socio-economic transformations, most of which were a direct consequence of the unprecedented levels of wealth creation, circulation, and consumption made possible by technological innovation itself. The programme argued that the analysis of the trajectories of industrial technology and consumption in Central Africa remained the exclusive preserve of colonial social anthropologists, for most of whom history was of little consequence, and of materialist historians, for whom the only historical process worth exploring was the structural opposition of labour and capital.

The previous CART conferences have given rise to a number of edited volumes. The first and most well known of these is *One Zambia, Many Histories*, which sought to shed light on the

varied post-colonial experiences of Zambia.¹ *Living the End of Empire*, dedicated to Andrew Roberts, focuses on the late colonial period and contains chapters on African nationalism, settlers, and colonial observers.² More recently, *The Objects of Life in Central Africa* has paid attention to varied patterns of consumption and social change in the broader Central African region, including Congo and Zimbabwe as well as Zambia.³ The current special issue, though not directly related to these earlier books, builds on this legacy.

The first contribution, by Robert Ross, deals with household budget research in colonial Central Africa. Questioning colonial methods of counting, it provides a historical counterpart to Morten Jerven's popular book *Poor Numbers*.⁴ Despite the objectivity of numbers, Ross argues that survey methods by colonial officials and social scientists alike were highly political and generally served to support colonial enterprises. Ross's contribution is an important call to question the numbers we find in the archives. Furthermore, this paper adds a different perspective to studies of the works of colonial officials and Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) scholars.

Enid Guene's paper on trade and labour migration in the Copperbelt region from 1910-1940 argues that the Zambian and the Congolese Copperbelts, despite their separate historiographies, have been highly interconnected ever since the discovery of large-scale copper deposits. Labour migration, trade, and politics tied the two cross-border areas together, even during the Great Depression, when it was difficult to find employment on the copper mines. Guene makes a strong point for a cross-border perspective and challenges the common nation-state view, so strongly represented in much of the historiography. Apart from engaging with Zambian and Congolese historiography, this paper adds to debates on borders and cross-border trade. Luckily, her call to take up cross-border studies of the Zambian and Congolese is now indeed being answered.⁵

Looking at the Copperbelt from a connected but geographically distant perspective, Iva Peša's paper looks at labour migration from Mwinilunga District in north-western Zambia, from 1930-1970. Peša argues that whereas previous studies have foregrounded the economic and political rationales for labour migration, we should pay equal attention to issues such as consumption, social relationships, and self-realisation. Far from being the outcome of push and pull factors, migrants shaped their own life trajectories, based on aspirations and decisions, which were not necessarily based on the market or the state. Labour migration from Mwinilunga District linked rural and urban areas and highlights the themes of consumption, migration, and power.

The research project 'From Muskets to Nokias' has merely highlighted some of the major and interesting research themes in Central African history. Many histories still remain to be written, but a modest start has been made to address alternative perspectives and to pay attention to the polyvalence of history. Future work, by young and promising Zambianist and Congolese scholars, might well address the economic history of Central Africa or pay attention to the social history of Copperbelt towns.

¹ J-B. Gewald, M. Hinfelaar, and G. Macola (eds.), *One Zambia, many histories: Towards a history of post-colonial Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

² J-B. Gewald, M. Hinfelaar, and G. Macola (eds.), *Living the end of empire: Politics and society in late colonial Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

³ 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: Brill, 2013).

⁴ M. Jerven, *Poor numbers: How we are misled by African development statistics and what to do about it* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2013).

⁵ See, for instance, M. Larmer and E. Kennes, 'Rethinking the Katangese secession', *The journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 42:2 (2014), 741-61.

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The Politics of Household Budget Research in Colonial Central Africa

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This paper investigates the various academic studies of the household budgets of Africans living in what became the countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, and the Congolese province of Katanga. These studies were made during the colonial period, by members of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, the Central Statistical Office of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, in what was then Salisbury, and by Belgian researchers in the Congo. It demonstrates how what at first sight appears to be a neutral form of investigation was in fact highly politicised. On the one hand, there were many who showed how African incomes were insufficient to meet their needs. These studies were basically highly anti-colonial. On the other hand, the Central Statistical Office and the Belgians were much more concerned to show how Africans were prospering under colonial tutelage. All of them, however, contributed to making colonial society much more 'legible' for its rulers.

At the centre of much economic research, and behind many calculations of the Gross National Product (GNP) of a country or some part of it, lie investigations based on the collection of household budgets. The principle seems easy and effectively neutral. On the basis of some criterion—preferably some form of random selection—a number of households are chosen by the researchers and asked to record all the economic transactions which they perform over a specific period of time, not less than a month, but preferably rather longer. Given enough such budgets, it generally proves possible to make sensible statements about the prosperity (or lack of it) of the community in question, the distribution of wealth and income within it, and the patterns of consumption that it enjoys. These can then form the building blocks for wider and more comprehensive statements about economic conditions.

These calculations seem to be neutral enough. In practice, however, the process of compiling and analysing this sort of data inevitably requires such a plethora of decisions that they necessarily become highly politicised documents. In the first place, of course, there are questions as to where the research should be done, and to what questions it is hoped to provide evidence in answer. The sort of research involved is likely to be costly, both as regards time and money, with the consequence that the enthusiasm for it will generally depend on the perceived need of fund-givers, particularly governments, to acquire information on some subject, and this can never be considered a neutral act. Statistics are collected, inter alia, to provide rulers with information about their subject population, in order to tax them and to control them. Indeed, the whole history of statistical practice emphasises the degree to which statistics and statecraft were, and remain, intertwined.¹ But states, of course, are never monolithic. There is always some form of internal tension, and political argument. As a result, statistics can be, and have been used, to argue for varying positions within a state's political life. It is true that statisticians have a clear interest in making the numbers seem inviolable, with the consequence that the political path of which they approve will seem inevitable. Often the products of the statistical

¹ See for instance: Theodore M. Porter, *The rise of statistical thinking, 1820 – 1900* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986); Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in numbers: The pursuit of objectivity in science and public life* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995); Alain Desrosières, *La politique des grand nombres: Histoire de la raison statistique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993); and, more generally, James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1998).

bureaux are claimed to be the politically neutral results of professional expertise, and thus a denial of politics. But, *pace* Margaret Thatcher and Herbert Spencer, there is always an alternative, and generally more than one. In this paper I will be examining how studies of household budgets in late colonial South Central Africa, here defined as the modern countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and the province of Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo, were used as weapons in the political arguments about the standard of life of the African inhabitants of the territories, and thus about the political future that should be followed.² This of course derived from the practice of research, and the choice as to which households should be studied. Truly random samples are rare enough, and often decisions were made which unconsciously overemphasised the poorer, or indeed the richer, elements of society. Analysis and the presentation of results can also be full of bias. To say that, for example, 60% of households have an income below some specified standard, necessarily entails saying that 40% have incomes at or above that level, but the messages provided by the one comment or the other are likely to be profoundly different.

The first major studies of Central African colonial economies came in the early 1930s, with the studies of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt carried out by E. A. G. Robinson. However, he did not have the resources or the time to conduct household budget surveys. He limited his comments in this regard to reporting an official's estimate of how the wages that had been earned in the Roan Antelope mine were actually spent.³ Nevertheless, the Northern Rhodesian government began to feel the need for more information on the financial position of the Copperbelt miners, in particular after the 1935 strikes in the mines. The Governor, Hubert Young, had had a long-term interest in creating a research institute in order to study the social problems of the colony, and in this sense the strikes gave an impetus to this project, giving him extra arguments in his efforts to convince the Colonial Office in London of the need to found such an institute, and to fund it.⁴ At any event, he was successful in his endeavour, and the Rhodes Livingstone Institute was established. Out of this came the first significant study of African household economics, which was conducted by Godfrey Wilson in Broken Hill (now Kabwe) in 1940 and reported in his path-breaking *Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia*.⁵

Wilson begins his *Essay* with the comment that 'I have tried ... to limit myself to a bare description of the facts and of their inevitable connections and I have not—so I honestly believe—either allowed my own political opinions to colour that description or made covert propaganda for any cause, or race, or party'.⁶ This is undoubtedly the truth, as Wilson experienced it, but it nevertheless betrays a realisation that his work could be read as implying a political position on his part. It is indeed not difficult to do so. Wilson actually makes two highly disputable general claims about the world in general and Northern Rhodesia in

² For comparative material, see: Gerardo Serra, 'An uneven statistical topography: The political economy of household budget surveys in late colonial Ghana, 1951-1957', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 35:1 (2014), 9-27.

³ E. A. G. Robinson, 'The economic problem' in J. Merle Davis (ed.), *Modern industry and the African* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 179.

⁴ Audrey Richards, 'The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute: An experiment in research, 1933 - 1938', *African Social Research*, 24 (1977), 275-8; as cited in Lyn Schumaker, *Africanizing anthropology: Fieldwork, networks and the making of cultural knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2001), 167, 313, but see also: Richard Brown 'Anthropology and colonial rule: Godfrey Wilson and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia', in: Talal Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the colonial encounter* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973).

⁵ Godfrey Wilson, *Essay on the economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* (Livingstone: Rhodes Livingstone Institute, 1941).

⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

particular. The first is based on a radical level of Equilibrium Structural Functionalism, at a level that is beyond the general run of norms. He departs from 'the assumption that uneven change leads to pronounced social tension, which *must* then be somehow overcome'.⁷ In other words, if social change has not affected all the interlocking facets of society in very much the same way, and to similar degrees, then 'a state of temporary disequilibrium is set up. It can only be a temporary state; society cannot continue if some of its relationships and institutions are in implicit contradiction with one another; readjustment must be made; equilibrium must be re-established in a new form, whether the human actors desire its re-establishment or not'.⁸ What Wilson, in his study of Broken Hill, was arguing was further that disequilibrium was the result of the incorporation of 'tribesmen' into the capitalist world system, and that this could only lead to tensions, until, as a result of the struggles of the labour force, equilibrium would be achieved again. It is an analysis which he states to be fact, but it was just as much a radical rejection of the colonial system of Northern Rhodesia, not perhaps based on a Marxist analysis in the strict sense, as class is not a factor in Wilson's discussion, but nonetheless not a line which would have made him popular with the great majority of whites in the country.

Wilson had done his fieldwork in Broken Hill at the beginning of World War II. This conflagration was fought at a great distance from Central Africa, but naturally had its effects on the economies of the region. In particular, difficulties with transport and the changed priorities of production meant that the cost of living on the Copperbelt, in particular, increased dramatically. To find out what the effects of this were, the government brought in A. Lynn Saffery, a trade union organiser who had had much experience in South Africa doing budget studies for the Institute of Race Relations. His report made clear how the inflation of the war years was reducing most of the inhabitants of the mining towns to poverty.⁹

During and after World War II, the British state began to look for ways of increasing its revenue from its African colonies, and generally began to set about 'developing' them. In 1940, the British Parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, which allowed London to provide its colonies with sums for investment, at least after the Colonial Office had received a ten-year plan in which the intentions of the colonial governments were set out. In practice, of course, this did not get going until 1946, although it is not implausible that Saffery's surveys were commissioned with the provisions of the Act in mind. At any rate, after the end of the war, in many places the British implemented actively interventionist policies with regard to agriculture and stock-keeping, which have been described as 'the Second Colonial Occupation', an invasion of the daily practices of African farmers and cattle herders by agriculturalists, veterinary surgeons, and the like.¹⁰ The resentment this produced was often at the heart of early nationalist agitation. However, alongside such actions, it was also considered necessary to increase the knowledge that the government had of what was going on in its territory. Equally, a series of strikes, particularly in the docks and on the railways, meant that the intervention of government in the relations between employers and their employees began to increase.¹¹ There is thus the sense in which the activities of the social scientist in collecting information about the Africans' way of life was as much a part of the Second Colonial Occupation as were the dealings of an agricultural officer.

⁷ *Ibid*, 15.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ A. Lynn Saffery, *A report on some aspects of African living conditions on the copper belt of Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1943).

¹⁰ D. A. Low and J. M. Lonsdale, 'Introduction' in D. A. Low and Alison Smith (eds.), *History of East Africa III* (Oxford: Oxford UP), 12.

¹¹ Frederick Cooper, *On the African waterfront: Urban disorder and the transformation of work in colonial Mombasa* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987).

These comments allow the placing of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) as part of the colonial offensive in immediate post-war Africa, even if many of those who worked for the RLI might have hated the thought. Ethnography, whether rural or urban, was a way in which the colonial rulers, whether in Africa or in London, could acquire information about their subjects. It may not always have been the information which they wanted to receive, or that met their prejudices, but it was sufficiently appreciated for the funding of the RLI to be maintained for many years.¹²

John Barnes and Clyde Mitchell in the rural hinterland of the Copperbelt conducted the first budget studies under the RLI. The primary purpose of this research was to train the neophyte researchers in the techniques of fieldwork, above all, according to the director, Max Gluckman, the collection of genealogies and the taking of a census. Their interest in household budgets came, it was noted, as the result of a direct request from the department of agriculture. But it was all part of the project of making the colony better known, and thus more easily governable.¹³

This was even more clearly the case with the research carried out by Phyllis Deane, in conjunction with the RLI, although she was not on the Institute's pay roll. Deane was a trained economist who was well at home in the new economic world of planning and of, as she noted, 'the great increase in the accepted responsibilities of government, which characterised the post-war world'. In essence, her project was to work out ways to construct national accounts in the circumstances of a colonial state, where there was both a vast quantity of economic activity that went on outside the cash nexus, and in which the sources of information on even that part of the economy that used cash were fragmentary and of poor quality. It was a heroic task, and one that entailed working together with the RLI's anthropologists, notably Barnes, Elizabeth Colson, and Gluckman, to gain some insight into the economic structure of African farming households. These allowed her to produce information sufficient to give 'a series of articulated but necessarily incomplete social accounts', but not of the quality which would have formed the basis for 'detailed national budgeting'. The quantities of local level data that she would have needed were simply not available to her.¹⁴ Nevertheless, from the point of view of this paper it is clear that the work on the budgets of farming communities was a part of the process whereby colonial governments attempted to strengthen their grip on the societies of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Her information at a local level derived exclusively from Northern Rhodesia. There were at that stage no budget studies for Nyasaland, and her estimates of production and consumption derived entirely from agricultural surveys. At the very least, her work would have increased the 'legibility', to the state, of the colonial population.¹⁵ Further, the colonial government would be able to use the results of such a survey to determine, at least in part, its economic policy, with all the attendant consequences of that. State intervention requires the information that Phyllis Deane attempted to provide. She did not manage to do so to her own satisfaction, but in the process, obviously, she showed what more was needed.

¹² Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*.

¹³ J. C. Mitchell and J. A. Barnes, *The Lamba Village: Report of a social survey*, Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town, (new Series no. 24), Cape Town, 1950, pp. v – vi and 56-67.

¹⁴ Phyllis Deane, *Colonial social accounting* (Cambridge: CUP, 1953), quotations from pp. 1 & 228; on Phyllis Deane's Central African work see Mary S. Morgan, 'Seeking parts, looking for wholes', in: L. Daston and E. Lunbeck (eds.), *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), and Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, 104 – 7; for the difficulties of African statistical material to this day, see Morten Jerven, *Poor numbers: How we are misled by African development statistics and what to do about it* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2013).

¹⁵ Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

As part of the same shift in governmental style, colonial officials may have attempted to produce similar information on which to base their decisions. In 1947, for instance, the District Commissioner (DC) of Mwinilunga, in the far northwest of Northern Rhodesia, reported that households in his district spent between 15/- and £3 on consumer goods each year.¹⁶ Exactly how he came by this information is unclear. Probably, the DC and his messengers asked around in a haphazard and non-scientific way. All the same, it gave him the feeling that he was basing his decisions on the granting of trading licences on something other than his own rule of thumb.

In addition to the essentially anthropological approach of the RLI, there was another way of looking at household budgets that was to be found throughout Southern Africa. This was much more official and openly activist, in one way or another. It could be found, for instance, in the investigations of the 1950 Commission of Enquiry into the Cost of Living in Northern Rhodesia. The ending of the War had not led to a return to pre-War price levels. Since wages, notoriously, are likely to be much more sticky than prices, this led to a threatening crisis on the Copperbelt, which would have considerable consequences not merely for Northern Rhodesia, but further for the whole sterling area. The perception of danger led to the institution of the 1950 Commission. This body was primarily concerned with the income and expenditure patterns of the white miners and their families, and in this sense laid the basis for the great, if temporary, prosperity of this group through the 1950s.¹⁷ The Commission did also collect a substantial number of African workers' budgets, even though it could not vouch for the representativeness of the information so provided. It did however make the point that foodstuffs played a major part in the expenditure of the African workers, rivalling the importance of clothing in the budgets, and that the rising cost of foodstuffs was severely affecting the ability of Africans in towns to survive at a reasonable level of comfort. It also noted that many respondents reported much higher expenditure than income, but was unable to provide an explanation for how this could come about.¹⁸

Over the years, moreover, there had developed in South Africa a substantial body of work which was primarily designed to demonstrate how impoverished the black population of the country was, and thus how measures had to be taken to alleviate the squalor in which in particular the urban blacks found themselves. This was above all centred on the Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg, but the main proponent was perhaps Edward Batson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town.¹⁹ Batson is famous, or perhaps notorious, for having developed the concept of the Poverty Datum Line, which he defined as 'an estimate of the income needed by any individual household if it is to attain a defined minimum level of health and decency'. This, Batson repeatedly pointed out, was a very conservative measure, giving the 'barest minimum at which subsistence and health can theoretically be achieved', and did not allow for anything

¹⁶ National Archives of Zambia, SEC2/955, F. M. N. Heath, Mwinilunga tour report, 16.11.1947. I owe this reference to Iva Peša.

¹⁷ Ian Phimister, 'Workers in wonderland? White miners and the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, 1946 – 1962', *South African Historical Journal*, 63:2 (2011), 183 – 234; Ian Phimister, 'Proletarians in Paradise: the historiography and historical sociology of White Miners on the Copperbelt', in: Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar & Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Living the end of empire: Politics and society in late colonial Zambia* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011), 151 – 160.

¹⁸ *Final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Cost of Living*, Lusaka, 1950, 182 – 194.

¹⁹ This corpus of work in South Africa is discussed in a sister paper to this one, 'The politics of household budget studies in South Africa', to be published in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, probably in 2015. For Batson, see D. Grace Davie, 'Poverty knowledge in South Africa: The everyday life of social science expertise in the twentieth century', Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 2005.

except food, clothing, housing, fuel, lighting and transport to work.²⁰ It thus left out everything not immediately necessary for survival.

Batson himself, together with his wife, conducted research in Salisbury (Harare) in the last years of World War II, although this was primarily concerned to establish the level of the Poverty Datum Line, rather than estimating how many households had to exist on incomes which were below that level. The Batsons did not have the opportunity to do the concerted research in the townships that would have been necessary to establish such information. They had to be content with recording the price of foodstuffs, clothing, and so forth.

Batson's concerns, and to some extent his methods, were taken up by some of those in the RLI. Clyde Mitchell, always the most mathematical and quantitative of the RLI's anthropologists, was well aware of what Batson had been doing, and incorporated his methodology into his survey work on the Copperbelt.²¹ So did David Bettison, a self-proclaimed sociographer who was employed at the request of the Government of Nyasaland to perform basically quantitative research in Blantyre and the peri-urban settlements around what was then the territory's capital. These studies are in general in the category 'dry as dust', but on occasion the political message gets through. In 1960, he published an article on the Poverty Datum Line, in which he compared the situation in Salisbury, Blantyre, and Lusaka. His conclusion was that the wages which were paid might be sufficient to keep a single worker out of poverty, but were certainly not sufficient for family units. In the long run, he was to comment, 'privation becomes manifest in the form of high disease rates, fatigue, irresponsibility, inefficiency and a host of indirect factors a fully developed economy cannot afford to bear'. There was no margin for safety, nor was there peace of mind for employers or 'the political leaders of the community'.²² In this last clause, the final words of his article, Bettison made plain his personal support for the Nationalist movements in what was then known as Central Africa.

This is even more evident in an article he published in the next issue of the *Rhodes Livingstone Journal*.²³ He repeated his contention, based on his Poverty Datum Line studies, that 'real wages [in British Central Africa] have not risen much above subsistence level for a single man'. In an analysis which foreshadows Harold Wolpe's famous arguments on the articulation of modes of production in South Africa,²⁴ Bettison argued that Europeans were able to exercise coercion over potential African labourers, and thereby 'remove the influence that a limited supply might have on wages in the face of constant or increased demand'. This could only work because colonial governments had gained 'complete control of [the] political institutions'. As a result the Europeans were able to impose wage rates which were in no way sufficient for a family income. Even into the 1950s, wages were fixed by Wage Boards, whose decisions 'are still based on principles of subsistence costs, and of consumption units smaller than family type households'. In other words, women were subsidising men, and the rural areas were subsidising the towns. This could only end as a result of effective trade unions and political action, and Bettison saw both as necessary and incipient.

²⁰ As cited in Edward Batson, *The poverty line in Salisbury* (Cape Town: School of Social Science and Social Administration, 1945), 1-2.

²¹ Schumaker, *Africanising anthropology*, 157.

²² David G. Bettison, 'The poverty datum line in Central Africa: Comparative material from Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 27 (1960), 1 - 40.

²³ David G. Bettison, 'Factors in the determination of wage rates in Central Africa', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 28 (1960), 23 - 46.

²⁴ Harold Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: From segregation to apartheid', *Economy and Society*, 1 (1972).

As this shows, in the course of the 1950s, the study of African household economics became embroiled with the broader politics of the region. The arguments were essentially about the institution of the Central African Federation, which was to encompass both Rhodesias, Northern and Southern, and also Nyasaland. This was an attempt to preserve and to strengthen white rule throughout the region, and its prime supporters were the settler community of Southern Rhodesia, and, to a lesser degree, the whites of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. In particular, the former group was to prosper from the transfer of resources accrued by the mining industry to the economy of Southern Rhodesia, whose secondary industry boomed in this period, and which took benefit from projects such as the building of the Kariba dam.²⁵ It became the target of African nationalist agitation, most notably in Nyasaland, but also in Zambia.²⁶ It was in this context that the Central Statistical Office of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, based in Salisbury, began to conduct their own surveys, mainly in Southern Rhodesia but also in what was to become Zambia. The Office was, of course, a government institution. Though it would never have admitted to the fact, the Office's work was in fact a justification of white rule in the region and of the dominance of Southern Rhodesia over the other territories. Their concerns were not, as in the contemporary South African Institute of Race Relations surveys in Johannesburg,²⁷ or Bettison's studies in Nyasaland, to discover what proportion of the African Population in Salisbury and Bulawayo were living in abject poverty. Rather, they were concerned to discover the level of income at which individuals or families began to make savings. A number of their early reports hypothesised that household incomes would increase by £1 a month each, and attempted to calculate what the result would be for the African market, perhaps not such a mad suggestion as it might seem, because there was pressure for the raising of the minimum wage.²⁸ As Timothy Burke commented of the surveys, they were 'explicitly political documents used both to demonstrate that Africans were better off than anticolonial critics supposed and to encourage strategically limited increases in African wages'.²⁹ The demand for higher wages was not totally illusory. Entrepreneurs in what was to become Harare, and in other Rhodesian towns, were agitating for an increase in African spending power.³⁰ Nevertheless, the Statistical Office was clearly glad to provide a description of black urban life in very positive terms.

This conclusion belies the fact that the reports of the Central Statistical Office are technically of a higher quality than most others in the region. The first director, J. R. H. Shaul, was aware of the

²⁵ Julia Tischler, *Light and power for a multiracial nation: The Kariba Dam scheme in the Central African Federation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁶ See above all John McCracken, *A history of Malawi* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012). A good, up-to-date history of Zambian nationalism still has to be written, though it is unlikely ever to supplant Andrew Roberts, *A history of Zambia* (London: Heinemann, 1976); but see Giacomo Macola, *Liberal nationalism in Central Africa: A biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

²⁷ See Ethel Wix, *The cost of living: An enquiry into the cost of essential requirements for African families living in Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Reef towns, August - December 1950* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1951); Olive Gibson, *The cost of living for Africans* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1954); Joy de Gruchy, *The cost of living for urban Africans, Johannesburg, 1959* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1960).

²⁸ I have used Central Statistical Office, *Second report on urban African budget survey in Salisbury, 1957/58*, Salisbury 1959; *First report on urban African budget survey in Bulawayo, 1958/59*, Salisbury, 1960; *First report on urban African budget surveys in Umtali and Gwelo, July, 1959*, Salisbury, 1960; *Second report on urban African budget surveys in Umtali and Gwelo, July, 1959*, Salisbury, 1960; See also 'Family budgets in Africa South of the Sahara : III - Southern Rhodesia', *Inter-African Labour Institute Bulletin*, 7:5 (1960), 50 - 85, for summaries of the main findings.

²⁹ Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy men, Lux women: Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 218.

³⁰ Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, chapters 5 & 6; c.f. Phyllis Deane, 'The Industrial Revolution in British Central Africa', XII, 1962.

latest developments in statistical and sampling theory.³¹ The data are presented in the driest possible way, without any embellishment as to the economic, social, or political context within which the subjects of the research were living. Even the major political events, the break-up of Federation and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia, did not receive a mention when the budgets collected in 1968 were compared with those of a decade earlier. Even at this stage it was apparently assumed that all would go on as long before. It is only in the acknowledgement of help from, for instance, the African Affairs Department of the city of Bulawayo, or of Rhodesian Railways, that the place of the investigations in the fraught world of the Central African Federation becomes evident.

Within these reports, then, there is a clear message. African prosperity was growing in the cities of Southern Rhodesia. White rule and tutelage over the Africans was beneficial to the latter, and political agitation was not necessary. Statistics such as these were not necessarily damned lies, but were clearly being used as part of the hegemonic project of white Rhodesia.³²

This was something that the African communities fully understood, probably far better than the white economists who ran the Central Statistical Office. In 1960, the Office decided to pursue its work north of the Zambezi. It wanted to make surveys covering the towns of Lusaka, Livingstone, Broken Hill (Kabwe), Ndola, Kitwe, Mufulira, and Chingola. Undoubtedly, there was an implicit hope for comparison with the situation to the South, but the reports of the survey were scrupulously and conspicuously totally silent on the matter. Certainly it was assumed further that the surveys would be of importance to the Government of Northern Rhodesia, and thus worth doing even if they might exacerbate political tension. Therefore, attempts were made to enlist the support of the 'African mine workers unions', but there is no indication that this was forthcoming. There were not just the normal suspicions of such surveys, which could generally be dispelled. The politics of the country militated heavily against success. As the report noted:

The following factors upset this survey:

- (a) There were riots,
- (b) There was intimidation of fieldworkers,
- (c) There was political activity against the survey. It was described as being:
 - a. Designed to find out how much was spent on beer so that wages could be reduced accordingly,
 - b. Connected with the Monckton Commission,
 - c. Held with the object of registering people for Federation,
- (d) There was adverse publicity based on an isolated incident in Lusaka, which reacted unfavourably in the Copperbelt towns where the surveys started later.³³

³¹ J. R. H. Shaul, 'Sampling surveys in Central Africa', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 47 (1952), 139 - 54. The RLI researchers were not enamoured of his methods, which they saw as missing much relevant detail; Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*, 180.

³² This seems to have been the case even when the surveys were conducted by members of the notably nationalist Samkange family. Perhaps they were primarily concerned to satisfy the board of the Rhodesian Milling and Manufacturing Company which had commissioned the study, though I must admit that I have not been able to consult the original report. See Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, 219. See also Terence Ranger, *Are we not also men? The Samkange family & African politics in Zimbabwe, 1920 - 1964* (London: James Currey, 1995).

³³ *First report on the urban African budget surveys held in Northern Rhodesia from May to August 1960*, Central Statistical Office, Salisbury, 1960, 2. On the Monckton Commission, see R. Cranford Pratt, 'Partnership and consent: The Monckton Report examined', *International Journal*, 16 (1960-61).

The townships of Mufulira and Chingola had to be excluded from participation in a follow-up survey, because of difficulties encountered during the first one.³⁴ For all this, the results of the surveys are presented in the heavily matter-of-fact manner of the other works.

Later, after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), repeat surveys were conducted in Bulawayo, Salisbury, and the Rhodesian midlands.³⁵ In Bulawayo, it was noted that there was 'a fair amount of resistance on the part of householders to participate in the survey', mainly, it is believed, due to suspicion of the motives of the survey. Even here, non-response was often attributed to the fact that only the husband was in residence. In Salisbury, suspicions of the motives of the survey were said to be linked to a desire for privacy, and in the Midlands it was said to be above all the absence of family members which caused the problems. How far these comments properly reflect the state of affairs, how far the investigators were concealing non-cooperation and how far the power of the Rhodesian state was enforcing compliance, is all very difficult to say. What is clear is that the Statistical Office was able to produce part of the ideological justification for white rule in the region, and many Africans realised this and acted accordingly.

Moving further north, there is a corpus of work on the budgets of Africans living in colonial Belgian Congo. The most informative of these deals with Elizabethville, which immediately afterwards became Lubumbashi.³⁶ It is worth mentioning because it is by some distance the most detailed and informative of the works I have been discussing in this paper, and of course because the two Copperbelts, the Congolese and the Zambian, had much in common, and many connections. It was based on research carried out between October 1957 and March 1958 in the townships of the city and the compounds of the Union Minière de Haut Katanga and of the Chemins de Fer de Bas-Congo. The work was under the auspices of the Centre d'Etude des Problèmes Sociaux Indigènes in Elizabethville (CEPSI) and of the University of Ghent and was clearly done in the assumption, almost universal among Belgians both in the colonial Congo and certainly in Belgium, that colonial rule would last for decades. This was overtaken by the events of 1959 and 1960, and was only published when it was already known that the Congo would become independent on 30 June 1960. What had begun as a standard piece of colonial science, an attempt by the CEPSI to gather the information which would aid in the development of a colonial state, was seen as a way to help the new Congolese state build on the advantages which that state had provided. More than ever, it was claimed,

... in the young Congolese state, objective study of all socio-economic problems will be highly necessary. And who should in this have a greater responsibility than the inhabitants of this country, both Flemings and Walloons, who can be proud that over the last eighty years they have brought more economic and human development in the heart of Africa than has no doubt ever been achieved in any country in the world in such a short time?³⁷

³⁴ In the absence of a comprehensive study of African nationalism in Zambia, along the lines of John McCracken's *A history of Malawi*, it is impossible to say if these mining settlements were particularly volatile, or if purely logistic reasons dictated the statisticians' plans.

³⁵ Central Statistical Office, *Report on urban African budget survey in Salisbury, 1969* (Salisbury, 1970); *Report on urban African budget survey in Bulawayo, 1968* (Salisbury, 1970); *Report on urban African budget survey in the Midlands (Gwelo, Que Que and Gatooma), 1970* (Salisbury, 1971).

³⁶ Ferdinand van Assche, *De consumptie der inlanders te Elizabethstad: Proeve van onderzoek naar haar structuur en ontwikkelingstendens*, (Elizabethville: Centre d'Etude des Problèmes Sociaux Indigènes, 1960); see also E. Bourgeois, 'La rémunération des travailleurs: Quelques budgets familiaux', *Bulletin du C.E.P.S.I.*, 33 (1956); L Baeck, 'Enquete budgetaires sur les congolais évolués de Leopoldville', *Bulletin du C.E.P.S.I.*, 38 (1958).

³⁷ A. J. Vlerick, 'Ten geleide', to Van Assche, *Consumptie der Inlanders*, 6 (my translation).

Indeed, the whole tone of the research report was to stress how an African middle class, above all the clerks, and to a degree the skilled labourers, of the city were developing a pattern of consumption much more allied to the European than to that of the villages from which they had come, but which was nevertheless fundamentally driven by the imperatives of the village, in particular the drive to promote the economic equality of the inhabitants (*nivelleringsstendens*), which was seen as fundamentally inimical to economic development. At the same time, the distinction between Europeans and the Congolese, very visible in Elizabethville, could lead to problems. European manners were most attractive, though the African emphasis was on the surface of the behaviour. In particular the imitation of the Europeans in terms of clothing and furniture was most important. However, as Van Assche wrote,

... the native is caught between two fundamentally different views on life. The traditional with its ancient decency and well-known pattern is undoubtedly the strongest, while the new, the Europeanised with its comfort, display and luxury, is the more attractive ... In terms of economic growth, this split in way of life is disadvantageous for a harmonious and assimilated development. The flower of the native economy flourishes in the artificial climate of the speeded development. The break that the rural population applies to the growth of wealth among the townspeople, only increases the discrepancy between the latter and that of the whites, and increases the frustration of the urban native, especially as he is confronted with an exceptionally high white living standard.³⁸

The paternalism of Belgian colonialism could scarcely be better illustrated.

One final comment is necessary. In this paper I have stressed the problems, which the political agendas of the various research traditions entailed for the researches they produced. However, it must be recognised that this does not disqualify them as historical sources. They are full of very important information, and necessarily form part of the basis by which the changing consumption patterns of Africans through the twentieth century can be analysed. Like all historical sources, they require careful reading, and critical discussion, but material should not be discarded or ignored because it is in some sense contaminated. Otherwise, any form of history writing would be impossible.

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Copper's Corollaries: Trade and Labour Migration in the Copperbelt (1910-1940)

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The geopolitical importance of the mining industry in Zambia and Katanga, and the rural-urban migration patterns that it brought about, has been the subject of many studies. And yet, the extent to which these industries were interdependent is often downplayed or overlooked. Looking more closely at the history of the Zambian and Katangese Copperbelts, one can see that, despite their separateness, there was interplay between them. During the British South Africa Company rule of Rhodesia (1899-1924), Northern Rhodesia was developed as an important labour and food reserve for the Katangese mines. Following the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, Katanga's dependence on Northern Rhodesia diminished as the Katangese mines found new sources of labour and foodstuffs. Yet, at the same time, it appears that the Depression served to make the border more porous than it had been before. People of all origins crisscrossed the border between Belgian and British Africa to look for employment or to sell their produce. This article aims to bring this interaction to light.

Introduction

The Copperbelt, as a geological zone, is known for its copper deposits and associated mining and industrial development. This comparatively small strip of land – covering some 450 km in length and 260 km in width – has, for about a century, formed the economic backbone of the two countries that host it: the Republic of Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And yet, the extent to which these industries were interdependent is often downplayed or overlooked. The Copperbelt itself, because of its distribution over two countries, is generally studied as if it consisted of not one but two distinct entities. This, as Luise White contends, has to do with two factors: a disinclination to mix the history of Francophone and Anglophone Africa, and the fact that ‘the two histories do not provide a good chronological or comparative fit’.¹ The main discrepancy appearing in the timelines of the two regions is that copper mining in Katanga (the Congo’s most southern province where the Copperbelt is located) began well before the First World War, whereas in Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was known at the time), it only really took off in the late 1920s. Another element that seems to set the two Copperbelts apart is the apparent disparity in labour policy. By 1926, before any copper mine was fully operational in Northern Rhodesia, the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK), Katanga’s all-powerful mining company, had begun to recruit a more permanent labour force. On the Northern Rhodesian side, on the other hand, a family presence was not yet encouraged.² This created the idea that labour was ‘stabilised’ in Katanga while the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia still relied on a “classic” migrant labour system featuring short-term migration by rurally based migrants to the urban industrial centres.³ The work of the *Rhodes-Livingstone*

¹ Luise White, ‘Class struggle and cannibalism: Storytelling and history writing on the copperbelts of colonial Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo’, in *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 274.

² *Ibid.*, 275.

³ James Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), 41.

Institute (RLI) – founded in 1935 with a view to investigate the impact of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation on local populations – contributed to a large extent to this idea.⁴ In contrast, James Ferguson, in his influential *Expectations of Modernity*, argued that ‘rural-urban mobility was not always so orderly’⁵ and that processes of mobility and urbanisation were more varied, more complex than usually suggested. ‘Already in the 1920s and 1930s’, he argued, ‘many Copperbelt mineworkers were much more used to long-term urban dwelling than the image of the cyclical migrant would suggest. Indeed (...) many of the early Copperbelt workers had long histories of urban employment at other labour centres in the region, especially the Katanga mines in the Belgian Congo and in the mining centres of Southern Rhodesia’.⁶ In this way, different research traditions coupled with a larger tendency, in academia, to think in a ‘nation-state framework of analysis’,⁷ meant that ‘with few exceptions, the threads that link the two Copperbelts have been overlooked, and the fluidity with which African labour penetrated colonial and cultural borders has not been the source with which history was written’.⁸ In the present paper, it will be argued that the early development of the ‘two’ Copperbelts, far from being separate, was in fact defined by interdependence. Looking at the three decades spanning from about 1910 to about 1940, this paper will explore how transnational migration developed and consolidated in the colonial period as people looked for better wages and cheaper or better goods.

Investments and Capital

In the late nineteenth century, Katanga, whose mineral wealth had been advertised by the works of such iconic travellers as David Livingstone and Frederick Stanley Arnot, had been the object of an intense competition between European powers. The contenders were King Leopold II of Belgium and financier Cecil Rhodes who, through his *British South Africa Company* (BSAC), was staking out claims to territory in the African interior on behalf of the British government. After more than two years and six expeditions (three Belgian and three British), it became obvious that Rhodes had lost the race to the mineral wealth of Katanga, having only been able to stake out claims as far north as the Luapula River and Lake Mweru in the East and the Congo-Zambezi watershed in the West, i.e. just below the area where copper deposits were known to exist.⁹ As a result, Cecil Rhodes’ company had become the owner of a large territory, located right between the Katangese Copperbelt to the north and the mineral-rich territories south of the Zambezi (future Zimbabwe), with no apparent significant mineral wealth of its own.¹⁰ That

⁴ For a detailed study of the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in the twentieth century, see Lyn Schumaker, *Africanizing anthropology: Fieldwork, networks, and the making of cultural knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2001).

⁵ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 39.

⁶ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 50.

⁷ William I. Robinson, ‘Beyond nation-state paradigms: Globalization, sociology, and the challenge of transnational studies’ *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 4 (1998) 562.

⁸ White, ‘Class struggle and cannibalism’, 275.

⁹ For a detailed description of the ‘Scramble’ for Katanga, see *Comité spécial du Katanga, 1900-1950* (Brussels: Editions L. Cuypers, 1950), 11-21. See also Hugh M. Hole, *The making of Rhodesia* (London and Edinburgh: Taylor & Francis Group, 1967), 249-50; John W. Donaldson, *Marking territory: Demarcation of the DRC – Zambia boundary from 1894 to the present day*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 2010, 103; Bruce Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville, 1910-1940* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 17.

¹⁰ Prospecting, which began in the 1890s, only led to the discovery of minor deposits. Lead and zinc were found at Broken Hill (now Kabwe) and copper at the ‘Hook’ of the Kafue River as well as at Roan Antelope, Rietbok and Bwana Mkubwa. Further copper deposits, as well as some gold, were also found at Nkana, Kipushi and Kansanshi, just 12 miles south of the Katangese border. See Francis L. Coleman, *The Northern*

territory, known as 'Northern Rhodesia', was, as Andrew Roberts put it, 'an awkwardly shaped piece of debris resulting from Rhodes's failure to obtain Katanga'.¹¹ Northern Rhodesia having proved a disappointment, it was not long before the BSAC turned its attention back to Katanga. The latter, despite its obvious mineral wealth, had hitherto been left largely unattended by the Belgians who lacked funds, personnel and capital. This explains why, in 1900, Robert Williams, one of Rhodes' former associates and owner of a prospecting company, the *Tanganyika Concessions Limited* (TCL), was able to readily obtain from Leopold II the opportunity to explore the Katangese Copperbelt. By 1906, more than one hundred deposits had been located, including the gold mine of Ruwe (now Mutoshi), the copper and cobalt mine at Kambove, and the extremely rich carbonate deposit of the 'Star of the Congo' mine, close to which the future capital of Katanga, Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), was to be founded in 1910.¹² Thanks to this 'plenteous bounty', Katanga was promised a very bright future indeed, being expected to be, as the *Livingstone Mail* claimed in 1908, 'the brightest spot in Africa'.¹³

In order to handle what promised to be an extremely important mining interest in Katanga, the *Comité Spécial du Katanga* (CSK), a semi-private concessionary company responsible for administering the territory, and the TCL launched a new chartered company on 28 October 1906: the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK).¹⁴ The fact that the UMHK was to be a joint venture between British and Belgian interests stemmed out of necessity. Not only was there no one in Belgium familiar, let alone experienced, with the mineral industry, but neither was there anyone familiar with Africa and its population. It is in recognition of that fact that, though the UMHK was Belgian in name, the technical direction, a.k.a. the overseeing of operations on the ground, was entrusted to the TCL.¹⁵ In practice therefore, it was the TCL that dictated most of the UMHK's decisions, both short-term and long-term.¹⁶ In addition, the UMHK was entirely dependent on British southern Africa for the export of its minerals. There was no connection between Katanga and a seacoast, which was a *sine qua non* condition for the export of Katanga copper on a large-scale. There was a project to build a rail link between Katanga and the Atlantic via the port of Lobito (near Benguela in Angola) but the line, whose construction had started in 1903, was not yet usable (and would not be until 1931).¹⁷ By contrast, the British railway line from Kimberley (South Africa) had reached Broken Hill (now Kabwe) in Northern Rhodesia in 1907. Sustained by a financial alliance between the TCL and the BSAC, the

Rhodesia Copperbelt 1899-1962, technological development up to the end of the Central African Federation (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1962), 6-7; René Brion & Jean-Louis Moreau, *De la mine à Mars: La genèse d'umicore* (Tiel: Lannoo, 2006), 67; Charles Perrings, *Black mineworkers in Central Africa: Industrial strategies and the evolution of an African proletariat in the Copperbelt 1911-1941* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), 9.

¹¹ Andrew Roberts, *A history of Zambia* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), 175.

¹² Robert Williams, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 20, no. 80 (1921), 249; Coleman, *Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 8-9; Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 10. For a detailed description of the initial prospection undertaken in Katanga, see Maurice Robert, *Le Katanga physique, cinquantième anniversaire du Comité Spécial du Katanga, 1900-1950*, (2nd edn. Brussels: Editions Montana, 1950), 95-101; *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, 53-9.

¹³ *Livingstone Mail*, 26 December 1908, as quoted in Coleman, *Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 14.

¹⁴ Robert, *Le Katanga physique*, 101; Coleman, *Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 9; Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 10.

¹⁵ The first administrative council of the UMHK was composed of five British representatives, all of whom were attached to the TCL, and five Belgians. See Brion & Moreau, *De la mine à Mars*, 74-5.

¹⁶ Until World War I, the main language of communication in Elisabethville was English. Between 1907 and 1911, the Company even had two European headquarters: a head office in Brussels, where the Belgian senior management met, and a 'technical committee' in London. See White, 'Class struggle and cannibalism', 275; Bruce Fetter, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga 1920-1940, La naissance d'une sous-culture totalitaire' *Cahiers du CEDAF*, 6 (1973), 4.

¹⁷ Robert Williams, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', 253; Hance, William A. & Irene S. Van Dongen, 'The Port of Lobito and the Benguela Railway' *Geographical Review*, 46, no. 4 (1956): 466.

Southern African line was extended and reached Elisabethville in 1910. Henceforward, the Katanga mines imported coal and coke from a colliery just south of Victoria Falls, while their copper was exported via Rhodesia Railways to the Mozambican coast.¹⁸ The profits generated through the use of the Southern African railway were reportedly the means by which the *British South Africa Company* was able to survive at all. In August 1931, Sir Robert Williams remarked:

Dr Jameson, when he asked me after Rhodes's death to try to get a connection for the Rhodesia Railways to the Katanga mines, told me that unless I got this, the Chartered Company would go into liquidation as that Company, of which Dr Jameson was then the president, was losing £300,000 per annum under its guarantee of interest to the Rhodesian Debenture Holders.¹⁹

In this way a mutually beneficial relationship was developed between Katanga and its southern neighbour. Katanga got the initial investment and capital that it needed while the Northern Rhodesian economy was kept afloat. However, given the context of severe imbalanced dual power in Katanga, it was not long before tension between Belgian and British settlers escalated within the province in general and the UMHK in particular. By the end of the First World War, Anglophobia was rife in Elisabethville, allowing Belgium to pursue a policy of 'nationalisation' of its industry²⁰ thanks to which, by the early 1920s, Brussels had finally and definitively come to replace London as the source of capital for the development of the Katangese Copperbelt. The *Tanganyika Concessions* had by then become little more than a holding company and the combination of British entrepreneurship and capital that had been so vital in the early years had lost its importance.²¹ Yet, the UMHK, and the Katangese copper industry in general, could not break away completely from its English-speaking neighbour. For one thing, if British presence in the UMHK directorate was diminished it was by no means eradicated. British money kept flowing in and out of the Union Minière and British directors sat on the board until as late as the 1960s.²² For yet another thing, the two territories were to continue to be economically interdependent for a while still, not least in terms of infrastructure (of which the railway was the principal element) but also in terms of *labour* and *trade*.

Migrant Labour

A Rhodesian Workforce for Katanga (1910-1925)

Around the time when initial prospecting was starting to decline in Northern Rhodesia, it became increasingly clear that, worse than not being lucrative, there was also a danger that the colony might not even be self-sufficient. At the end of his lengthy 1899 report on the Anglo-

¹⁸ Ian Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia, 1900-1953: A study in the limits of colonial power*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1972, 57; Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 177; Robert, *Le Katanga physique*, 103-104; Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 12; Williams, 'The Cape to Cairo Railway', 253.

¹⁹ Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 12.

²⁰ Between 1917 and 1920 many non-Belgians were successfully uprooted from their position of power in Katanga thanks to the constant campaign of opposition waged by the local Belgian settler community. This process was made all the easier by the fact that the Belgian franc declined in relation to the pound sterling after the war making London less keen to invest in Belgian ventures. See Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, chapter 4 and Robert, *Le Katanga physique*, 110-113.

²¹ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 75-78.

²² Matthew Hughes, 'Fighting for white rule in Africa: The Central African Federation, Katanga, and the Congo Crisis, 1958-1965' *The International History Review*, 25, no. 3 (2003), 595.

German boundary, C.F. Close remarked that, though some parts of North East Rhodesia on the Lower Zambezi river (well south of the boundary with the Belgian Congo) were fertile, the plateau region between the lakes where the boundary ran was a 'remote, unhealthy, unprofitable country', adding that 'it is unlikely, unless the native population largely increases in the next generation, that the country will be able to pay for its own administration'.²³ Fifteen years later, in his official report on the Anglo-Belgian boundary commission, I. Walker made a similar point:

One can only hope that when N.E. Rhodesia is fully opened up to prospectors and exploration, minerals (above all tin) will be discovered in workable quantities, for without this incentive to progress, this country will remain a backwater of empire for several years to come.²⁴

Walker's comment turned out to be very insightful. From 1900 to the mid-1920s, Northern Rhodesia was acted upon as an appendage to its southern counterpart. If Northern Rhodesia was not to be another Katanga, there was only one economic function for it to perform: to serve as a labour reserve for the expanding mines of southern Rhodesia.²⁵ There is little doubt that one of the principle aims of the three shillings hut tax, introduced in the first years of the twentieth century, was to manipulate the Northern Rhodesian population into engaging in migrant labour.²⁶ Since opportunities for employment within Northern Rhodesia were scarce, Northern Rhodesians had few options to pay their tax but to engage in wage labour outside the territory.²⁷

At the same time as this was being implemented in Northern Rhodesia, Katangese mines went into function and were – rather conveniently – in dire need of labour. The labour policy in Katanga was to copy the South African model in which workers would typically stay for a period of 6 to 9 months and then be replaced by new recruits. The success of such a scheme presupposed the comparative proximity of dense population clusters. Therein lay the rub. For not only was there no transportation means or set routes that could carry potential recruits to the mines, but Katanga was also much less populated than South Africa.²⁸ In 1912, at the time when mining in Katanga was entering its industrial phase, Katanga was described as '[une terre] inhabitée, sans ressource aucune au point de vue main-d'œuvre et ravitaillement'.²⁹ In addition, the region was still bearing the scars left by the era of the Congo Free State, as was noted in 1928 by the Northern Rhodesian Department of Native Affairs:

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

²³ Confidential Report C. F. Close, 24 January 1899, FO 64/1549 (NAZ), p.35, as quoted in Donaldson, *Marking territory*, 136.

²⁴ Report by I. Walker on the Anglo-Belgian Boundary Commission, 1914, RC/609 (NAZ).

²⁵ Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 12; Jane, Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1983), 16.

²⁶ The Hut Tax was enforced in 1901 in the East of Northern Rhodesia and in 1905 in the West. See Bruce Fetter, *Colonial rule and regional imbalance Central Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 89, 147.

²⁷ Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 177.

²⁸ Fetter, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga', 12; Edward Clegg, *Race and politics: Partnership in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Oxford UP, 1960), 39.

²⁹ 'An uninhabited territory without any resource at all in terms of labour and foodstuffs'. See Rapport sur L'Union Minière du Haut Katanga by Jules Jadot, Mars 1 1912, AGR, UM I, 963 as quoted in Brion & Moreau, *De la mine à Mars*, 81.

Congo Free State to exploit the rubber trade (...) The rubber trade is also responsible to a great extent for the sparseness of the population.³⁰

For want of any viable alternative, the UMHK started to look towards Northern Rhodesia for the recruitment of its workforce.³¹ For this purpose, a subsidiary called the *Robert Williams & Co.*, was formed. *Robert Williams & Co.*'s recruiters, using Fort Rosebery (now Mansa) as a base, set up an efficient recruitment system, concentrating in the area in Northern Rhodesia within 200 miles of Katanga's capital city, Elisabethville. In the early years, the *Robert Williams & Co.* was the sole provider of labour in Katanga, supplying all the requirements of the UMHK's three centres of operations – Ruwe, Kambove and the Star of the Congo – as well as a portion of the company's portage requirements.³²

This, however, was the source of some concern for the BSAC, which seemed to resent the fact that Katanga was diverting some of the labour that could have been sent southwards to support the development of Southern Rhodesia.³³ According to Charles Perrings the bans against outward migration and labour recruitment that were enforced in 1905, ostensibly in response to the sleeping sickness epidemic in the Luapula valley, were in fact part of an attempt to place 'an embargo on the shipment of all labour from North-Eastern Rhodesia to Katanga'.³⁴

Unfortunately, the closure of the border was less effective a check on African mobility than the BSAC would have liked.³⁵ By December, the acting administrator was describing the closure of the river as a 'dead letter', arguing that the 'popularity' of the Katanga mines was such, due to their geographical proximity, that no system of patrol could be effective. 'So long as the natives have no other lawful sphere of labour', he went on, 'they will evade the restrictions on their movements'.³⁶ At the same time, in Katanga, though a new recruiting agency called the *Bourse du Travail du Katanga* (BTK) had been launched in 1910, it was unable to round up enough recruits to meet the stringent needs of a territory undergoing an industrial and commercial boom.³⁷ These circumstances made it increasingly obvious to both BSAC and UMHK that a compromise had to be found. A conference was consequently held at Fort Rosebery in October 1910 where the North-Eastern Rhodesian administration agreed to permit the controlled flow of labour on the Luapula, on the condition that the *Robert Williams & Co.* retained control of recruiting operations inside North-Eastern Rhodesia.³⁸ Further agreements were reached in May 1911, establishing that Northern Rhodesian workers had to return home at the end of their

³⁰ Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, Doc.1A (NAZ).

³¹ Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 14.

³² Brion & Moreau, *De la mine à Mars*, 81; Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 39.

³³ Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 15.

³⁴ Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 15-16. See Chapter 2 for the measures enforced to fight the spread of the disease.

³⁵ David M. Gordon, *Nachituti's gift: Economy, society and environment in Central Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 70.

³⁶ Acting Administrator of North-East Rhodesia to the Office of the BSAC in London, December 18 1908 as quoted Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 17.

³⁷ Brion & Moreau, *De la mine à Mars*, 81.

³⁸ In exchange for allowing the Robert Williams & Co. to recruit freely in Northern Rhodesia, the North Rhodesian administration requested that the recruits should 'cross the Luapula at Kalonga and proceed via Ndola and thence by rail', that they should be 'medically examined first in the district where engaged and again at Ndola' to avoid the spreading of sleeping sickness, and that no Northern Rhodesian should enter Katanga voluntarily without a 'permit'. See L. A. Wallace, North Western Rhodesia Administrator's office, Livingstone, to the Vice Governor General, Elisabethville, 26 January 1911, M.O.I. A.34, 3551, Liasse 46 (Brussels African Archives).

terms (six months renewable for six more). Then, finally, in a supplementary agreement reached in 1913, the Katanga government agreed to the posting of a permanent Inspector of Rhodesian Labour at the 'Star of the Congo' mine.³⁹

By 1920, despite a short drawback towards the end of the First World War (when Northern Rhodesia closed its border temporarily because of the pitiful quality of the labour camps in Katanga⁴⁰), labour migration routes were well established and the volume of the movements along them had increased. The Rhodesians had built themselves a reputation in Katanga for their reliability and resilience and their accumulated experience was a growing asset.⁴¹ Their accommodation was better than those of the Katangese from the surrounding area, and since they were paid in sterling rather than depreciating Belgian francs, they also enjoyed greater buying power.⁴² The number of Northern Rhodesians in Katanga grew steadily over the years⁴³ with a particularly dramatic and sudden increase in 1920 and 1921 (probably related to a rise in hut tax in 1920⁴⁴): In February 1919, there were 1,301 Northern Rhodesian natives employed by Union Minière. By January 1920 there were 5,752, and by January 1921, 5,983. In 1920 and 1921, Northern Rhodesians represented more than half of the Union Minière's workforce.⁴⁵ The vast majority of the Northern Rhodesian recruits came from the Luapula area (the Awemba and Tanganyika Districts) in North-East Rhodesia. In December 1921, out of the 1,290 Rhodesian recruits that arrived that month, 1,069 came from North-East Rhodesia (158 came from Barotseland and 63 from other areas).⁴⁶ North-East Rhodesia had poor soils, was infested with tsetse flies, which hampered both agriculture and cattle husbandry, and had little to offer in terms of employment opportunities.⁴⁷ It is not surprising therefore that Luapulans soon flocked to the advantageously located Katangese mines to the point of forming the largest part of the UMHK's Rhodesian workforce.

From the mid-1920s, however, there was increased evidence that this *status quo* would not be sustainable. For one thing, Rhodesian recruits, despite their growing numbers, proved insufficient to palliate the difficulties in recruiting local labour and satisfy the ever-growing need for labour of a fast industrialising region. By the end of 1924, the Governor General of the Belgian Congo, Martin Rutten, warned the Minister of the Colonies that 'a labour crisis was fast developing', particularly alarmingly so in Katanga because of the 'impuissance où est l'Union Minière du Katanga de

³⁹ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 39-41.

⁴⁰ Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for February 1919, 28 April 1919, HC/1/3/53, Tag.1140, Loc.286, Doc. 1053/19, (NAZ).

⁴¹ Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 46.

⁴² Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 81-85.

⁴³ See Reports of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for February 1919 (HC/1/3/53, Tag.1140, Loc.286, 1053/19 28 April 1919); for January 1920 (A4/1/3, Tag.824, Loc.209, Doc. 80, 27 April 1920); for January 1921 (A4/1/3, Tag.824-Loc.209, Doc. 101, 18 April 1921).

⁴⁴ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 81.

⁴⁵ In his 1972 PhD thesis, Ian Henderson, based on the reports of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives, calculated that workers of Northern Rhodesian origins went from representing 34% of the UMHK workforce in 1917 (with 1661 workers) to representing 56 % in 1921 (with 5548 workers). Numbers dropped the following year (2177 workers, i.e. 33% of the UMHK workforce) but went up again in 1923 (4267 workers, i.e. 43% of the UMHK workforce. See Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 47.

⁴⁶ Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for December 1920, 7 March 1921, A4/1/3, Tag.824-Loc.209, Doc. 99.

⁴⁷ The Luapula supply areas, i.e. the great plateau of North-Eastern Rhodesia along the Luapula between Lake Mweru and Bangweolu, comprised the Bemba, Bisa, Mambwe, Iwa, Namwanga, Lungu, Ushi, Chisinga, Ngumbo and Eastern Lunda peoples. See Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 42-44; Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 14-15; Giacomo Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe, history and politics in North-Eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 2002), 215.

maintenir ses effectifs ouvriers à la hauteur de ses besoins'.⁴⁸ This crisis, he went on, would not be an easy one to resolve because at its heart lay a basic conundrum:

Plus s'accroîtra l'occupation économique, plus se développeront les voies de transport, plus s'échelonnent le long de celles-ci les exploitations commerciales, agricoles, industrielles, petites ou grandes, plus deviendront précaires les conditions d'existence des grosses entreprises qui doivent recruter leur main d'œuvre au loin parce que fatalement elles verront se rétrécir de plus en plus le champ de leurs recrutements et cela en même temps que leurs besoins augmenteront.⁴⁹

In another letter dated 25 July of the same year, the same Rutten pointed at another growing concern, common among industrialists and administrators in Katanga. Though there was little choice but to employ foreign labour as long as Katangese transportation means and routes were not better developed, the combined effect of the escalating need for labour and the almost exclusive reliance on foreign labour constituted a dangerous sword of Damocles for the Katangese industry:

Il y a des réalités qu'il faut savoir regarder en face : Le Katanga, c'est la grande industrie qui ne peut se développer, c'est à dire vivre, qu'en produisant toujours davantage. Pour cela il lui faut beaucoup de main d'œuvre, une main d'œuvre locale qui seule est assurée ; celle du dehors est précaire et se dérobera en nous ruinant dès que l'intérêt de concurrents voisins l'exigera.⁵⁰

And indeed, by the mid-1920s, that prediction was slowly beginning to materialise. At the same time as labour scarcity was once more becoming increasingly problematic, the UMHK also gradually ceased to be the sole mining power in the region.

The Rise of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt (1924-1931)

Until the early 1920s, Britain's main concern had been to see that Northern Rhodesia was made to pay for its own upkeep, mostly through the export of labour.⁵¹ However within a few years the situation changed unexpectedly and dramatically thanks to the growth of the automobile and electrical industries that followed the end of the First World War. These new industries engendered global demand for copper, considerably boosting copper prices. Towards the end of 1922, instead of granting individual prospecting licences, as it had previously done, the BSAC

⁴⁸ 'The inability of the UMHK to maintain a large enough labour force to meet its needs'. See, Office of the Governor General of the Belgian Congo, M. Rutten, to the Minister of the Colonies, Boma, 2 December 1924, M.O.I. A 34, 3544, Liasse 3 (Brussels African Archives).

⁴⁹ 'The more economic activity expands, the more transportation routes are developed, the more commercial, agricultural and industrial exploitations, both small and large, spring up along them, the more precarious the conditions of existence of the large companies will be, which have to recruit their labour force from faraway places because they ineluctably see their recruiting sphere diminish at the same time as their needs increase'. Ibid.

⁵⁰ 'There are realities that need to be faced: Katanga is a large industry that can only expand, i.e. survive, by constantly producing more. To do this, it needs a large labour force, a local labour force which is the only one that is guaranteed; labour from outside is precarious and will evaporate, ruining us in the process, as soon as the interests of our neighbouring competitors will demand it'. See Governor General of the Belgian Congo to the Minister of the Colonies, 25 July 1924, M.O.I. A 34, 3562, Liasse 84 (Brussels African Archives).

⁵¹ Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 185; Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 19.

began to grant exclusive prospecting rights to large mining concerns over extensive areas.⁵² Two fish were hooked: A. Chester Beatty, a London-based mining financier whose holding company, *Selection Trust Ltd* provided some funds in 1920; and Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of the *Anglo American Corporation*, who joined forces in 1924. New prospecting soon revealed large sulfide deposits containing copper at workable depths near Ndola close to the Belgian Congo border.⁵³ By 1930 four large new mines were being developed on the Copperbelt: Roan Antelope (Luanshya), Nkana (Kitwe), Mufulira and Nchanga (Chingola). The Rhodesian branch of Oppenheimer's *Anglo American Corporation* developed the Nchanga and Nkana mine, forming the *Rhokana Corporation Ltd* in 1931 to manage the latter. Beatty's *Selection Trust* incorporated the Roan Antelope and Mufulira mines in 1927 and 1930 respectively. In 1931, despite the worldwide Depression, Roan Antelope and Nkana went into production; Mufulira began producing in 1933; and a refinery was opened at Nkana in 1934. As a result, the value of exports increased spectacularly (five-fold) between 1930 and 1933.⁵⁴

However, the newly formed Copperbelt companies were at first hard pressed to obtain sufficient African labour. One part of the problem lay in the fact that no local labour was available. As the Compound Manager of Nkana noted:

The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt is a sparsely populated District, the supply of labour being totally inadequate to keep any large industry going and moreover the quality of the labour is very poor. It is therefore necessary to import labour from districts further afield.⁵⁵

This lack of local labour meant that the Copperbelt mines had little choice but to engage in the migrant labour system. When they did so, however, they encountered stiff competition. Labour routes to other industrial centres had already been well established, having been trodden for two decades. In 1928 it was reported that some 15.7 % of the male population of Northern Rhodesia was working outside the territory, in the mines of Katanga, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa and even Tanganyika.⁵⁶ To counteract this trend, the Copperbelt companies adopted a series of strategies. In December 1925, they convinced the government of Northern Rhodesia to put an official limit on the number of Rhodesians allowed to work in Katanga.⁵⁷ In May 1929, representatives of the two main Copperbelt Companies met together with the governor of Ndola and agreed to establish a new labour bureau: the *Native Labour Association* and by 1931, the Association had 27 agents stationed at strategic points throughout the territory. In this way, the mines secured the major part of their labour force by recruiting in distant regions, usually east of the Fort Rosebery: the area favoured by Congo recruiters. To compete with them, Northern Rhodesian mines offered short contracts of 180 days' work, and of course, wages were also forced up considerably, as each mine tried to outbid the other, as well as the Union Minière.⁵⁸

⁵² Clegg, *Race and politics*, 37; Larry J. Butler, *Copper empire, mining and the colonial in Northern Rhodesia, c.1930-1964* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), 14; Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 32.

⁵³ Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 20.

⁵⁴ Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 186; Elena L. Berger, *Labour, race and colonial rule: The Copperbelt from 1924 to Independence*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 5-6.

⁵⁵ W.J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, Doc. 1 (NAZ).

⁵⁶ Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, Doc.1A (NAZ), 6.

⁵⁷ Fetter, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga', 18.

⁵⁸ Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 33-34; Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 93; Berger (1974): 13.

These strategies did know a measure of success. At the same time foreign labour, mainly from Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, was also increasingly attracted to the north. Early in 1927 there were about 8,500 workers on all the mines and concessions in the territory. At the end of 1928 the figure had risen to 16,073; to 22,341 at the end of 1929; to 29,689 at the end of 1930; and to a peak of 31,941 in September 1930.⁵⁹ However none of these measures succeeded in meeting the demands of the new mines and general labour scarcity endured. The companies struggled to offer conditions of employment comparable, or nearly comparable to those at neighbouring mines and there, as was noted by the Department of Native Affairs in 1928, lay the heart of the problem:

Our greatest and most serious problem is that the best of our labourers proceed to Southern Rhodesia, Congo Belge and even Tanganyika Territory in quest of employment in preference to working in our own territory because of the better conditions of employment and the better terms of wages offered them in these places. There is no reason to believe that this state of affairs will alter until employers in Northern Rhodesia pay the same wages as can be obtained elsewhere and conditions in respect of housing, feeding, medical treatment etc. are improved.⁶⁰

Major G. St. J. Orde Browne, an expert on colonial labour policy, remarked in 1933 that the extent to which the African worker travelled and compared conditions of employment was not generally realised.⁶¹ News travelled rapidly along the established labour routes, and conditions on the mines of Katanga, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, as well as Tanganyika were well known. The general labour shortage of the 1920s in central Africa put skilled workers in a relatively good bargaining position in the labour market: jobs were plentiful and experienced workers in short supply. Northern Rhodesians knew they could change jobs easily, which they did, sometimes even before the end of their contracts.⁶² The Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, as the newcomer, found it particularly difficult to compete with industries that were better established and better 'stocked'.

It is no wonder therefore that when the Northern Rhodesian mines began construction in 1926, labourers did not flock to them. Katanga was a particularly tough act to follow, the standards of living of its mines having been described as 'positively amazing' by Orde Browne in 1929.⁶³ From 1926 on, to palliate the effects of the Northern Rhodesian government's decision to restrict the number of Northern Rhodesians in Katanga, the Union Minière had decided 'on an attempt to settle a native population on their properties and thus provide themselves with a permanent resident labour supply'.⁶⁴ From 1927, the UMHK began to enlist workers on three

⁵⁹ Berger, *Labour, race and colonial rule*, 13; Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 34.

⁶⁰ Northern Rhodesia Department of Native Affairs in Livingstone to Chief Secretary, 22 December 1928, SEC1/1472, Doc.1A (NAZ), 2.

⁶¹ Granville St.J. Orde Browne, *The African labourer* (London: Oxford UP, 1933), 120.

⁶² Very high rate of desertions were reported every month on both sides of the border. In the mine of Luishia in Katanga in particular, desertions were described as 'high' in Report of the Inspector of Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga for January 1921, 18 April 1921, A4/1/3, Tag.824, Loc.209, Doc. 101 (NAZ). In all the Northern Rhodesian mines, desertions were a regular occurrence. Berger, *Labour, race and colonial rule*, 13.

⁶³ Report by Labour Commissioner by Major G. St. J. Orde Browne on his Tour through the Belgian Congo and Angola, August 1929, SEC1/1472, Doc. 4, August 1929, Doc. 4 (NAZ).

⁶⁴ W. J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, Doc. 1 (NAZ), 4. The fact that Katanga mines were mostly open-cast mines meant that it was both possible and economical to use machinery on a large

year contracts and increasingly, though not exclusively, sought to attract men from within the Congo or Rwanda-Urundi.⁶⁵ In order to attract settled labour, a dramatic upgrading of African living conditions had been achieved by the end of the decade: the company built better houses and hospitals for employees and granted small salary increases and better food.⁶⁶ This made Katanga very attractive for Rhodesian workers and, even though the UMHK did indeed increasingly hire labour from within Congo, many Northern Rhodesians were still hired,⁶⁷ as is apparent from the UMHK recruiting statistics in the 1920s.

	Belgian Congo	Northern Rhodesia (North-East Rhodesia + Barotseland and Balovale)	Ruanda-Urundi	Other Countries
1922	3,395	3,332	-	651
1923	4,690	3,296	-	487
1924	6,003	5,586	-	528
1925	7,943	5,180	206	394
1926	8,522	3,058	1,353	779
1927	10,435	3,623	793	597
1928	9,888	4,196	1,273	633

Table 1. UMHK labour force nationalities statistics for the period 1922-1928⁶⁸

scale. This further enhanced the need for a skilled and stable workforce. It also meant that fewer workers were needed.

⁶⁵ In 1926 the government granted the company recruitment rights in the Maniema District of Orientale province as well as in the mandated territory of Ruanda-Urundi. In 1927 these rights were extended to three territories of the Lomami district: Kabinda, Tshofa and Kanda-Kanda. See Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 90.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 94. The then governor General had put particular emphasis on the upgrading of the workers' living conditions as part of an industrial strategy. 'Hygiène, éducation et instruction : tel doit être notre leit-motiv', he wrote in 1924. See, Office of the Governor General of the Belgian Congo, M. Rutten, to the Minister of the Colonies, 2 December 1924, M.O.I. A 34, 3544, Liasse 3 (Brussels African Archives).

⁶⁷ Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 32; Fetter, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga', 32.

⁶⁸ UMHK Annual and Quaternary Reports for the years 1923, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928. See References.

	Belgian Congo	Ruanda-Urundi	Other Countries
1929	9,432	2,528	4,664
1930	9,026	4,121	2,434
1931	6,866	2,316	866

Table 2. UMHK labour force nationalities statistics for the period 1929-1931⁶⁹

Yet the total number of Rhodesians present in Katanga is likely to have been much larger than the number of UMHK employees may indicate. In 1924 J. P. McGregor, the British Vice-Consul in Elisabethville, estimated that his office looked after the interests of 10,000 Rhodesians when only half that number was reported to be working for the UMHK at the time.⁷⁰ There are several reasons for this discrepancy. First was the fact that the UMHK was not the sole employer in Katanga. The expansion of Katanga was paralleled in other industries and by 1924, industrial and commercial employment in Katanga outside the UMHK accounted for an average of 12,000 men.⁷¹ In addition, Northern Rhodesians were also engaged in non-industrial wage labour. They worked as artisans, shopkeepers and, more importantly as 'houseboys' as it was 'a recognised fact that the Rhodesian natives are better servants. They are a pleasanter type and are better mannered, though their manners soon deteriorate after they have been a little time in the Congo'.⁷² As late as 1929, the total number of Rhodesian male natives employed in Katanga as a whole was 'estimated approximately at 11000 or 12000' when only a few thousands were reportedly employed by the UMHK (see tables 1 and 2).⁷³ Another element that explains the sudden increase in Northern Rhodesian presence in Katanga was the fact that, in 1923, the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* decided to allow labour recruits to bring their wives and families to the mining townships, arguing that a man accompanied by his wife was more likely to be contented and consequently would both stay longer and be a better worker.⁷⁴ In 1929, therefore, despite restrictions enforced by both Katangese and Northern Rhodesian authorities, the Northern Rhodesian community in Katanga had remained large, representing 37.5% of the population in the UMHK's compounds of the Elisabethville area and 44% of the population of the Elisabethville district as a whole.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ UMHK Annual and Quaternary Reports for the years 1929, 1930, 1931. See References.

⁷⁰ Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 70.

⁷¹ The major part was employed by the railways but others were also employed by more recent undertakings such as the *Charbonnages de Luena*, the *Société Coloniale de Construction*, the *Société Belge Industrielle et Minière du Katanga* and the *Société Ciments du Katanga*. See Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 49.

⁷² Report on Rhodesian Natives in Katanga, 22 October 1929, SEC1/1472, Doc. 6 (NAZ), 4.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 1.

⁷⁴ W. J. Schriviner (Compound Manager at Nkana), Report on Native Labour as Affecting the Copper Industry of Northern Rhodesia, 17 August 1934, SEC1/1293, Doc.1 (NAZ), 3.

⁷⁵ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 99.

The Change in the Direction of Labour Migration (1931-1940)

By the time Northern Rhodesian copper entered the world market in 1931, the onset of a severe depression dramatically reduced the price and demand for copper. In copper mining, the Depression years were 1929 to 1936, with copper prices starting to fall in mid-1930 and hitting bottom in 1932.⁷⁶ Mining companies in both southern Katanga and Northern Rhodesia reacted to the slump in copper prices by curtailing production and reducing the size of their labour force. Recruitment for the Katanga mines in Northern Rhodesia, which had already been decreasing for some years, came to a final end on July 31, 1931. In addition more than two-thirds of the UMHK workforce was laid off – the labour force was reduced from 16,000 to less than 5,000 Africans between 1930 and 1932 – with the Northern Rhodesians being especially targeted.⁷⁷ The number of Northern Rhodesians settled in Katanga drastically reduced from an approximated population of 20,000 in 1929 to an approximated population of 7,200 in 1932.⁷⁸ In the meantime, due to the combined effect of the Depression and the repatriation of Northern Rhodesia-born miners from the Congo, workers started to flock in the Northern Rhodesian mines in such numbers that the latter were able to disband recruitment in 1932.⁷⁹ What had been the companies' dearest hope just a year or two before, now was almost an inconvenience as there were more voluntaries than the Northern Rhodesian mines could realistically accommodate. In addition, the Depression was eventually to close all of the Northern Rhodesian mines except Roan Antelope and Nkana, and even these two remaining mines sharply scaled back production.⁸⁰ African employees on the mines, which had hit a peak of 31,941 at the height of the construction boom in September 1930, dropped to 6,677 at the end of 1932.⁸¹ Gradually, however, the Depression lifted and the mines began to recover. Mufulira reopened in October 1933 and production facilities expanded at all three major mines.⁸² As the world moved towards war for the second time, the demand for copper rose and prices followed accordingly.⁸³ From then on the Copperbelt enjoyed a phase of sustained growth thanks to which Northern Rhodesia was firmly established as one of the world's major copper producers by 1945. Accordingly, between 1935 and 1941, employment on the mines rose from 13,734 to 27,602, which was still a few thousand less than it had been at its peak in 1930. This reflected the vastly increased scale of operations at Mufulira, the reopening of Nchanga, and significant expansion at both Roan Antelope and Nchanga.⁸⁴ At the same time, there were substantial improvements in underground conditions, so that in many mines the conditions in which men worked improved and remuneration for skilled labour increased, bringing about an era of increased stabilisation in the workforce.⁸⁵

Yet, despite the seemingly clear-cut situation that has just been presented, it is, in fact, difficult to ascertain the precise timing of changes in the direction of labour migration at this time. It is

⁷⁶ Prices dropped precipitously from £112.635s per ton in 1929 to £27.25s per ton in February 1932. See White, 'Class struggle and cannibalism', 282; Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 21.

⁷⁷ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 123; Fetter, 'L'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga', 153; Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 101; Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 191.

⁷⁸ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, Doc. 18 (NAZ).

⁷⁹ Patrick O. Ohadike, *Development of and factors in the employment of African migrants in the copper mines of Zambia* (Manchester: Manchester UP [for] University of Zambia, Institute for Social Research, 1969), 1.

⁸⁰ Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 66.

⁸¹ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 50; Ohadike (1969):1.

⁸² Parpart, *Labor and capital on the African Copperbelt*, 21.

⁸³ Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 143.

⁸⁴ Ohadike, *Development of and ractors in the employment of African migrants*, 1.

⁸⁵ White, 'Class struggle and cannibalism', 283.

even more difficult to assess its significance. Blurring the picture is the fact that official data on migrant labour for that period is sorely lacking. The Northern Rhodesian government, which was only interested in labour in as much as it permitted the laws of supply and demand to operate freely, was insulated from the realities of labour conditions until the first Copperbelt strike broke out in 1935, and even then it took an additional few years before anything happened to change this state of affairs.⁸⁶ Orde Browne, attempting to analyse labour conditions in Northern Rhodesia in 1938, found that labour problems had been ignored in government annual reports: 'Statistics of the movement of natives, analyses of contract, records of court cases under industrial legislation and similar particulars, are not to be found: wider aspects of the problem are hardly mentioned'.⁸⁷ This haze of ignorance is a major handicap in attempting to quantify and analyse African labour before 1940. Henderson summarises the labour movements of the 1930s as follows:

If it is possible to generalise about the wage-labour activities of Africans in the 1920s and 1930s, one might say that labour migration continued unabated and uncontrolled by the government. The direction of the migration changed, but the volume continued unchanged except by the economic slump of 1931-33.⁸⁸

Henderson adds however that the exact number of ex-Katanga mineworkers who went directly to the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt remains an 'open question'.⁸⁹ It is likely that the new market provided by the Copperbelt was seen as a potential life-belt by many of them, especially the inhabitants of the Luapula, who depended heavily on copper mining. In 1930, only 1,620 (or 25%) of the 6,420 voluntary mineworkers from Mweru-Luapula Province were estimated to have proceeded to southern Katanga while all the others were said to have proceeded to the Copperbelt.⁹⁰ The fact that the Northern Rhodesian government stayed largely unconcerned with labour issues until 1935 also meant that the composition and provincial origins of the original Copperbelt labour force is obscure. The fact that as many as 60% of the able-bodied Bemba men aged from 15 to 45 were reported to be away from their villages in 1931 seems to indicate that they constituted the bulk of the unskilled labour force.⁹¹ Nyasaland also supplied a large number of workers.⁹²

As for the Rhodesian presence in Katanga, it would be wrong to think that it was wiped out. Many Northern Rhodesians remained in Katanga throughout the 1930s. In 1933, though their number in the UMHK workforce had gone down so much that it became almost insignificant (there were 230 Rhodesian *and* Nyasaland natives employed by the UMHK at that time⁹³), it was also reported that:

There are some 3,000 male Rhodesian natives employed in the town itself, practically, if not all, domestic servants and office boys are Rhodesian. In addition there are between 350 and 450 Rhodesian natives who have settled in the villages round the town as market gardeners. They rent the ground from the

⁸⁶ Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 68.

⁸⁷ G. St.J. Orde Browne, *Labour conditions*, para. 6, as quoted in Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 69.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 71.

⁹⁰ Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, 215.

⁹¹ Coleman, *The Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt*, 65.

⁹² Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 72

⁹³ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, Doc. 18 (NAZ).

Comité spécial and sell their produce in Elisabethville at the market which is held twice a week.⁹⁴

This said, it is undeniable that there was net decline in Northern Rhodesian population and that the lives of those who chose to remain were becoming increasingly difficult. The Rhodesians remaining on the mines – now representing only 5% of the workforce – were reportedly ‘mainly skilled or trained workmen who have long periods of service with the Union Minière behind them and who have been retained for this reason’.⁹⁵ For the rest of the Northern Rhodesians, those who were unemployed, independent workers, or who for whatever reason were not as immovable as the qualified miners, life in Katanga was markedly more uncertain. Belgian administrators attempted to pursue the same policy as the UMHK of reducing foreign presence in the native towns. Workers were expelled if they remained unemployed for more than a month. To cope with this situation, many jobless married men sent their families back to the villages, and many left Katanga altogether.⁹⁶ Yet, the fact that there had been a Northern Rhodesian presence in Katanga for two decades made sure that there would be a significant number of Northern Rhodesians ‘visitors’, as workers would regularly come and gauge their working possibilities. In 1930-31 alone, the British Vice Consulate in Elisabethville registered 4,480 Northern Rhodesian men who left Katanga, while 3,652 new arrivals took their place.⁹⁷ The exact fluctuation in volume of Northern Rhodesian ‘visits’ is difficult to ascertain but their numbers reportedly went from 110 in 1931 to 1,335 in 1932.⁹⁸ Even where numbers are lacking, the evidence of cultural exchange attests to the volume of cross-border migration. Religious movements, witch-finding movements, and new dance fads crossed the border regularly.⁹⁹ Particularly telling is the ease with which Kitawala (or Watchtower), a millenarian movement widespread in Southern Africa, penetrated Katangese circles to the dismay of the colonial administration. Conditions of insecurity and economic distress and the constant threat of expulsion made Northern Rhodesians particularly receptive to Kitawala teachings.¹⁰⁰ Even more revealing is the ease with which rumours spread across borders. Luise White offers a detailed study of how one such rumour relating to vampire men (known as *banyamas* in Northern Rhodesia and as *batumbula* in the Congo) gained momentum in both Copperbelts between 1930 and 1964. Following stories of ‘mysterious’ disappearances, strangers, European doctors, corpulent administrators, prospectors, surveyors and tourists were all highly suspected of being *banyamas*. In her *Speaking with Vampires*, White not only shows how these stories were to a large extent a symptom of the ‘mood’ of dissatisfaction and confusion among the African population in a period of deep economic recession, but she also points out how these stories, which were widespread in an area encompassing Katanga and all of the former BSAC territories, were also extremely similar in the way they were told and the elements that they comprised.¹⁰¹ The prevalence, pervasiveness and similarity of these stories are another indicator of the extent to which people penetrated colonial borders at the time.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Fetter, *The creation of Elisabethville*, 126-127.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Report on Rhodesian Natives in the Katanga by the Acting British Vice Consul in Elisabethville as at December 31st 1932, 15 February 1933, SEC2/165, Doc. 18 (NAZ).

⁹⁹ White, ‘Class struggle and cannibalism’, 276.

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed study of the development and impact of the Kitawala movement in Katanga and Southern Africa, see Higginson, John, ‘Liberating the captives: Independent watchtower as an avatar of colonial revolt in Southern Africa and Katanga, 1908-1941’ *Journal of Social History*, 26, no. 1 (1992).

¹⁰¹ See White, ‘Class struggle and cannibalism’ and Mwelwa C. Musambachime, ‘The impact of rumor: The case of the Banyama (Vampire Men) Scare in Northern Rhodesia, 1930-1964’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21, no. 2 (1988).

Trade and Markets

In the wake of the burgeoning mining industry, another catalyst for migration and economic interdependence received an enormous boost: trade. Trade was not a colonial innovation. The fact that trade predates the establishment of the copper industry is well supported by archaeological and literary evidence. Both point to the existence, from at least the beginning of the second millennium, of extended regional trade systems thanks to which subsistence and prestige goods – not least among which was *copper* – travelled widely. As for the ravages of the infamous trade in ivory, slaves and rubber that peaked in the late nineteenth century, they too are well known and documented.¹⁰² Yet these types of trade, extensive though they might have been, were of a different kind than the large-scale, institutionalised and wide-ranging marketing that developed in the Copperbelt in the early twentieth century. The latter came about as a direct result of the creation of large clusters of population that were entirely dependent on rations or marketed food.¹⁰³ In other words, the growth and development of large-scale trade in African foodstuff in the Copperbelt was a by-product of industrialisation and urbanisation.

Feeding Katanga: An Alternative to Migrant Labour

Despite their (eventual) economic expansion, neither Katanga nor Northern Rhodesia were renowned for the diversity of their economy. In a regional survey carried out in 1960, the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt was described as ‘a compact economic oasis with seven springs, surrounded by a most extensive economic desert’.¹⁰⁴ Agriculture was particularly underdeveloped. Only very few areas of Northern Rhodesia were made use of to produce some international market-oriented crops; tobacco was grown in the east of the country, in the Fort Jameson (Chipata) area, and small amounts of coffee were produced by plantation agriculture in the Abercorn area (Mbala) in the north-east.¹⁰⁵ So if Northern Rhodesia was used as a labour reservoir, it was considered to have little chance of becoming a grain one. And yet, for a while, it came to play just that role for the mines of Katanga.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the newly opened mines of Katanga were in great need of large quantities of foodstuffs to feed their new workforce. However the mining area of the Haut-Katanga, a high-plateau area (1,200 to 1,800 metres) with sandy soils, did not *a priori* offer favourable conditions for agriculture.¹⁰⁶ Southern Katanga in general, though it did contain small strips of fertile land, was characterised by what Bogumil Jewsiewicki calls ‘a near-absence of extensive areas capable of supporting large-scale mechanised agriculture’.¹⁰⁷ The

¹⁰² See Jan Vansina, ‘Long-distance trade-routes in Central Africa’ *The Journal of African History*, 3, no. 3 (1962); Richard Gray & David Birmingham, ‘Some economic and political consequences of trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the pre-colonial period’ in Richard Gray & David Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-colonial trade: Essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (London: Oxford UP, 1970); Pierre De Maret, ‘Sanga: New excavations, more data and some related problems’ *The Journal of African History*, 18, no. 3 (1977).

¹⁰³ Vellut, Jean-Luc, ‘Rural poverty in Western Shaba, c.1890-1930’ in Robin H. Palmer & Neil Parsons (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1977), 301.

¹⁰⁴ Special Commissioner to Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in Ndola, Report on a Regional Survey of the Copperbelt, 1 February 1960, WP1/2/64, Doc. 19 (NAZ).

¹⁰⁵ Clegg, *Race and politics*, 36; Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Robert, *Le Katanga physique*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Bogumil, Jewsiewicki, ‘Unequal development: Capitalism and the Katanga economy, 1919-1940’ in Robin H. Palmer & Neil Parsons (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1977), 318.

nearest areas with agricultural potential were the Kamalondo plain in the north along the Lualaba River and the Luapula-Moëro (Mweru) plain in the north-east. These, however, in the absence of river routes or railways, were too difficult to reach.¹⁰⁸ Eventually, after several measures taken to deal with this problem locally, such as the attempt to build up a substantial European farming community,¹⁰⁹ proved unsuccessful, it became imperative to find new food-supplying areas. One of the most immediate candidates was Northern Rhodesia. Northern Rhodesia had means of transportation, and since the Katangese mines were already tapping into Northern Rhodesian labour reserves, it was not much of a stretch to include foodstuffs into the deal as well. Accordingly, in March 1911, *Robert Williams & Co.* concluded a major agreement with the firm of *King and Werner* in North-Western Rhodesia, under which the latter was contracted to supply the mines with the bulk of their requirements of both grain and beef.¹¹⁰ These were, for the most part, raised by white immigrants, mainly Afrikaners from South Africa, who had begun to settle in Northern Rhodesia in the years that followed the Boer War. They were strung out along the railway that ran from Livingstone to Broken Hill, which happened to run through a tsetse-free and relatively fertile belt. The Katanga market expanded rapidly after the railway reached Elisabethville in 1910. Between 1911 and 1915, the white farmers of Northern Rhodesia were supplying most of the foodstuffs – cattle and maize – that fed the miners in Katanga.¹¹¹ In turn, Katanga, though it never represented a very large market (exports to it from Northern Rhodesia averaged about 50,000 bags per year in 1911-15 and peaked at around 100,000 in 1927), became the main outlet for all Northern Rhodesian producers for nearly two decades.¹¹² A prominent settler commented in 1913 that the Katanga mines had been ‘the saviour of this country; but for them I don’t know what would have become of us’.¹¹³

Africans too produced foodstuffs for Katanga, especially in the region where – incidentally – the bulk of the Katanga Rhodesian labour force came from: the Luapula. The Mweru-Luapula region emerged as an important food supply area for the same reason that it emerged as an important labour supply area: its geographical proximity to the growing industrial sites of Katanga.¹¹⁴ Fish, in particular, became the winning asset of the Mweru-Luapula. The Mweru-Luapula had no shortage of water, hosting or being adjacent to three lakes (Lake Mweru, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Bangweolu), two rivers (the Luapula River and the Kafue River) and the Lukanga swamps. The volume of trade between the lower Luapula valley and the Katangese mining towns increased substantially between 1912 and 1915.¹¹⁵ By 1927, the urban population of southern Katanga – the main market for Luapulan fish throughout the colonial era – seems to have consumed ‘some 500 tons of fish worth £5,000 and nearly the same quantity of native flour

¹⁰⁸ Jewsiewicki, ‘Unequal development’, 318-321.

¹⁰⁹ In 1911, as part of an attempt to boost the settling process in Katanga, farms were created along the railway lines and Belgian settlers were dispatched to Katanga. These ventures were not as successful as they could have been mostly because farming and agriculture were still acted upon as less of a priority compared to the development of the mining industry. See Robert, *Le Katanga physique*, 124; *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, 236.

¹¹⁰ Perrings, *Black mineworkers*, 19.

¹¹¹ Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 11-12; Roberts, *A history of Zambia*, 177; Mwelwa C. Musambachime, ‘Escape from tyranny: Flights across the Rhodesia-Congo boundary 1900-1930’ *Transafrican Journal of History*, 18 (1989), 153-54.

¹¹² Kenneth P. Vickery, ‘Saving settlers: Maize control in Northern Rhodesia’ in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, no. 2 (1985), 215.

¹¹³ *Livingstone Mail*, 5 December 1913, as quoted in Vickery, ‘Saving settlers’, 215.

¹¹⁴ Mwelwa C. Musambachime, ‘The role of Kasenga (Eastern Shaba) in the development of Mweru-Luapula Fishery’ *African Studies Review*, 38, no. 1 (1995), 57.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

valued at £600'.¹¹⁶ Though unstable (it depended on the prosperity of urban markets) the fishing industry brought the lower Luapula valley a new relative prosperity in the late 1920s. The Depression and the abrupt reduction in the demand for fish was to affect this business rather badly but the Second World War, increasing as it did the demand for copper and consequently for fish, allowed fish exports to southern Katanga to return to the same level as the late 1920s. In this way, fishing became an alternative to wage employment for a growing percentage of the residents of the Mweru-Luapula and allowed them to vary the ways in which they could make a living.¹¹⁷

In the 1910s and 1920s, the volume of food supplies imported and consumed in Haut-Katanga rose steadily, concurrently with the number of industrial workers employed in the region. In 1917-19 food consumption in Haut-Katanga was around 8,000 to 10,000 tonnes, of which probably 40 to 50 % was produced locally, the remainder being imported.¹¹⁸ However, the constant increase in the demand for food during the 1920s and the desire to make the Katangese economy less dependent on the Rhodesias, led the Katangese authorities to gradually review their agricultural strategy and search for new supply areas within the Belgian colonies. One crucial development in this regard was the opening up of new railway lines.¹¹⁹ On 12 July 1928 the *Chemin de fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga* (BCK), which linked Bukama, near the copper mines, to Port-Francqui (now Ilebo) in the neighbouring province of Kasai, was inaugurated. Then in 1931, the Tenke-Dilolo line linked the BCK to the Benguela railway of Portuguese Angola, and hence opened up Upper Lulua. These new lines, in addition to constituting a new export route for Katangese copper, not only enabled Kasai and Lulua respectively to send foodstuffs to the Haut-Katanga for the first time, but also contributed largely to boosting agricultural production in Katanga itself.¹²⁰ Throughout the 1920s and culminating in 1928 with the appointment of a new Governor of Katanga, Gaston Heenen, practical measures were implemented with a view to making local food-production self-sufficient: experts were called out, cattle was imported, experimental farms were created and market gardens, cultivated and overseen by 'agriculteurs indigènes' were developed around Elisabethville, Jadotville, Lubudi, Albertville and Sakania.¹²¹ The decisive turning-point came in 1934 when it was agreed that the province of Katanga should be divided into two *zones agricoles* (Tanganika and Upper Katanga). These new zones were in turn subdivided into *regions économiques* designated as producers of food for the urban centres. In theory, the Tanganika zone was to be self-sufficient while the Upper Katanga zone would be supplied from Kasai and Lomami.¹²² With the province so divided

¹¹⁶ W. Owen, Kawambwa Sub-District, annual report, 1927, encl. in E. Sharpe, Mweru-Luapula District, annual report, 1927, ZA7/1/11/8 (NAZ), as quoted in Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, 216.

¹¹⁷ Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, 216; Gordon, *Nachituti's gift*, 68; Henderson, *Labour and politics in Northern Rhodesia*, 62. For a detailed study of fishery in the Mweru-Luapula, see Gordon, *Nachituti's gift*.

¹¹⁸ Jewsiewicki, 'Unequal development', 320.

¹¹⁹ To be noted that several minor railway lines were built between 1910 and 1918. In 1910, the *Chemins de Fer des Grands Lacs Africains* (CFL) brought a railway from Kindu, on the Lualaba River, to Kongolo further down the river which made the transport of goods to Bukama possible. Then the Kabila-Albertville line, which linked Lake Tanganyika to the Lualaba was completed in 1915, and the construction of a line from Kambove to Bukama in 1918 meant that the Lomami and Tanganika districts as well as eastern Katanga were reachable. In the period 1921-5 supplies from these areas increased by 18 per cent. There were no further extensions until 1928. See Jewsiewicki, 'Unequal development', 319-322.

¹²⁰ *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, 255-256.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 243-261.

¹²² Jewsiewicki, 'Unequal development', 326-330. The Chamber of Commerce of Elisabethville described the project to the Minister of Colonies as follows 'Il s'agit de distinguer les agglomérations urbaines des agglomérations agricoles. Les premières grouperont les travailleurs et artisans employés à la ville. Les besoins de cette catégorie spéciale d'indigènes influenceront la conception des agglomérations nouvelles et leur prêteront un caractère propre. Les secondes grouperont les petits cultivateurs, qui jouiront du

into 'specialised' ('urban' or agricultural) units, the scheme was successful in diminishing Katanga's dependence on southern African farmers. Imports of maize and maize meal from the south continued to create some competition, but after 1930, Northern Rhodesian farmers, aware that they were rapidly losing the Katanga market, diverted their attention to the protected home market that the development of the Copperbelt offered them.¹²³ In this way, while before the Depression neither the administration nor the big companies assumed direct control over the food and labour markets, during and after the depression both became much more domineering. In Jewsiewicki's words:

the big companies in Katanga, wanted to lower the cost of living, and especially the total costs of the industrial Labour force, by a general lowering of agricultural prices and by offering high industrial wages, which would produce a supply of labour greater than the demand. In this way, the development of African market gardening, the first supplies of foodstuffs from Kasai all went hand in hand with the new labour-recruiting missions of the UMHK and the policy of labour stabilisation.¹²⁴

A Vibrant Sub-economic Culture: The Market

The end of Katanga's total dependence on Northern Rhodesia by no means put an end to cross-border commercial interaction, for the constant flow of travellers and the high concentration of population that the copper industry induced was accompanied by an automatic mushrooming of markets in every important mining town. By 1930, markets had become an important enough part of the economic life of the Copperbelt for the colonial administration of Northern Rhodesia to enforce regulations. These stipulated that that '(1) all markets established in a municipality or township shall be under the control and management of the local authority' and that '(2) all markets established by a native authority shall be under the control and management of the native authority'.¹²⁵ With these clauses, Northern Rhodesian authorities sanctioned the creation of markets on a more or less spontaneous basis, leaving local authorities to decide the shape these markets would take and how they would be organised. Copperbelt markets were to be copied on the Congo model in which inhabitants from the surrounding country could bring in dried fish, mealie, etc., for sale.¹²⁶ By the 1940s, the Copperbelts had become the home of the largest market complex in Central and Eastern Africa.¹²⁷ I.D.S. Mackigan, the District Officer for Chingola, gave a vivid description of the market in Bancroft in 1954:

African life at Bancroft centres round the market, which stands close by the largest of the Contractor's Compounds. Many African traders from Kasompe African township, Chingola bring their wares here; and fish traders from the

lopin de terre qui leur sera concédé moyennant une certaine obligation de défrichement et de mise en valeur'. See Dubois and Dewailly on behalf of the *Comité de la Chambre de Commerce* of Elisabethville to the Minister of the Colonies, 1 June 1932, A.I., 1390, Dossier 2, II-B-11, Annex (Brussels African Archives), 2.

¹²³ Vickery, 'Saving settlers', 215.

¹²⁴ Jewsiewicki, 'Unequal development', 324-325.

¹²⁵ Draft Markets Ordinance, 19 May 1930, SEC2/263, Vol. I, Doc. 7 (NAZ).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ In late 1959 there were 21 markets in the seven towns of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. See Marvin P. Miracle, 'African markets and trade in the Copperbelt' in Paul Bohannan & George Dalton (eds.), *Markets in Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1965), 698-99; Robert I. Rotberg, 'Rural Rhodesian markets' in Paul Bohannan & George Dalton (eds.), *Markets in Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1965), 585-86.

North and West, peanut vendors, salad oil sellers, men who boil up old bones and meat. All these traders operate in the open air or from small thatched booths. On a market day the scene is gay, animated and noisy, against a background of bright clothes for sale hung out upon lines or spread upon the ground.¹²⁸

The markets were the main, if not the sole, source of food for the African population in the mining towns. In 1960 a regional survey of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt revealed that there were 120,460 'natives' in employment in all the towns of the Copperbelt, that their total number was nearing 300,000 and that approximately the same number did their shopping 'on the Copperbelt itself'.¹²⁹ If markets were an important internal business, they were also very much an international one. In his social and economic study of the Copperbelt markets of 1947, V.W. Brelsford notes how the Copperbelt not only acted as a magnet to labour but also attracted 'traders of all types, even from as far afield as Senegal, Gambia and Nigeria'.¹³⁰ However, the most represented foreign group on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt was, unsurprisingly, the Congolese. On a day a random count was operated in the largest market of the Copperbelt, that of Mufulira, it appeared that fourteen out of the twenty-four sellers were Congo natives.¹³¹ In the same market, the Congo was also the main source of supply including many seasonal commodities such as mushrooms, maize, shallots, cassava root and leaves, potatoes of several types, and wild roots. It was calculated that the Copperbelt market in a normal year absorbed about 3,000 bags of cassava, practically all of which came from the Congo.¹³² This, Brelsford argues, is partly due to the fact that 'Mufulira (...) is the nearest market to the Congo, so that most of the village produce comes from over the border. The tribe in the nearby area of Katanga Province of the Congo is also Lamba and among them are settled a number of Northern Province Rhodesian Natives such as Chisinga, Ushi and Bemba'.¹³³ Northern Rhodesians too made use of the Katangese markets. It was noted in 1933 that the Solwezi people, who were a bit more isolated from the Copperbelt economic centres than other groups, still found 'a ready market for produce of all kinds at Kapushi Mine in the Congo where a large number of natives are employed by the Union Minière'.¹³⁴ In the 1930s, the gradually improved network of roads in Katanga also made the travelling of people and goods easier as was the expressed intention of the Katangese authorities that were keen to drain 'à notre profit les activités neuves de la Rhodésie du Nord' and to present the cities of Katanga as 'les foyers du centre minier de l'Afrique' by welcoming the 'trafic des touristes et des gens d'affaires de la Rhodésie vers le Katanga et vice versa'.¹³⁵

As they expanded, markets generally showed an increasing degree of professionalisation of market skills, generating more and more movement across the border. Peddlers, hawkers and traders of all kinds, some of whom were European or Indian, carried goods across the border

¹²⁸ I. D. S. Mackigan, Chingola District Officer, Tour Report N.1, 1954, WP1/2/18, Doc. 8 (NAZ).

¹²⁹ Special Commissioner to Ministry of Land and Natural Resources in Ndola, Report on a Regional Survey of the Copperbelt, 1 February 1960, WP1/2/64, Doc. 19 (NAZ).

¹³⁰ William V. Brelsford, *Copperbelt markets: A social and economic study* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1947), 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 44, 58, 93.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³⁴ Secretary for Native Affairs to the Chief Secretary, 25 September 1933, SEC2/263, Vol. I, Doc. 56 (NAZ).

¹³⁵ The Katangese authorities were keen to drain 'the new activities of Northern Rhodesia for our benefit' and to present the cities of Katanga as the 'focal points of the African mining centre' by welcoming the 'traffic of tourists and businessmen from Rhodesia to Katanga and vice versa'. See Dubois and Dewailly on behalf of the *Comité de la Chambre de Commerce* of Elisabethville to the Minister of the Colonies, 1 June 1932, A.I., 1390, Dossier 2, II-B-11 (Brussels African Archives), Annex : 8.

into Katanga and sold them for less than in Katanga's newly opened shops. Fish, especially dried fish, from the Mweru-Luapula continued to be a convenience food much in demand on both Northern Rhodesian and Katangese Copperbelts, though the former was a much more important consumer than the latter.¹³⁶ African individuals also spontaneously travelled to the nearest market, no matter which side of the border it happened to be, to trade the products of their land. This phenomenon took such proportions that it occasionally became the source of friction. The fact that Africans could to some extent decide where to do their shopping, and usually did so where it was most advantageous to them, was not necessarily to the advantage of permanent shops, or indeed to the advantage of the national economies. Measures taken to deal with these issues could be really unpopular. Some sources suggest that one reason for the very first strike that broke out on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, in 1935, was that, between 1934 and 1936, the Belgian Congo border was closed to all Northern Rhodesian trade and produce, ostensibly as protection against foot and mouth disease.¹³⁷ An annual report for the Native Affairs Department mentioned that:

restrictions imposed by the Government of the Belgian Congo on the transit of produce of every description across the Pedicle have for the time being practically killed the former flourishing fish trade conducted by natives of the Northern Province with the copper mines and the Congo. At Fort Rosebery, where it used to be a common thing to see large numbers of natives on bicycles laden with fish making for the copper mines, not a single permit was issued during the year.¹³⁸

Without the option of engaging in trade, the dependence of individuals on wage labour became all but absolute. As Perrings argues, 'it would thus seem reasonable to suggest that what occurred in 1935 was indicative of the cumulative resentment of those who had experienced (...) major blows to their capacity for economic survival within a comparatively short space of time'.¹³⁹ This episode highlights the extent to which cross-border trade had become both voluminous and geopolitically significant.

Conclusion

One could draw many parallels between the early development of Northern Rhodesia and Katanga. Both territories were formed and started their existence under the aegis of large companies. Both eventually became the economic neuralgic centre of their country. The population of both was deeply involved in mining, both in their own territory and each other's. Yet the extent to which their histories interpenetrated is easy to overlook quite simply because they cannot be made to fit a structured timeline of events. Developments on either side happened at a different pace, sometimes separately, sometimes not. The overall picture is – to put it candidly – messy. Yet the early decades of Copperbelt development can perhaps be divided into three more or less distinguishable – though by no means time definite – 'sub-periods'. The first 'sub-period' is characterised by the rise of Katanga as a major copper

¹³⁶ Beef was more readily available in Northern Rhodesia. Therefore, fish were not considered an essential item in worker's rations, as they were in the Belgian Congo. See Gordon *Nachituti's gift*, 70.

¹³⁷ Charles Perrings, 'Consciousness and proletarianization: An assessment of the 1935 Mineworker's Strike on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, no. 1 (1977), 40-41.

¹³⁸ Department of Native Affairs of Northern Rhodesia, Annual Reports (1934), pp.21-22 as quoted in Perrings, 'Consciousness and proletarianization', 49.

¹³⁹ Perrings, 'Consciousness and proletarianization', 49

producer on the one hand, and economic stagnation in Northern Rhodesia on the other. The second is characterised by the rise of Northern Rhodesia as a competing mining power and the gradual withdrawal of Katanga from its situation of economic dependency on British Africa. Finally the third 'sub-period' is characterised by the Depression of the early 1930s, which not only had the effect to accelerate some of the trends of the second period but also caused cross-border movements to intensify.

Throughout the late 1910s and the early 1920s, at the time when Northern Rhodesia's industrial economy was relatively stagnant, Katanga relied almost exclusively on Northern Rhodesian labour and foodstuffs. Yet the constantly rising labour and food needs of the Katangese mines coupled with the take-off of mining in Northern Rhodesia in the late 1920s, left Katanga in a conundrum to which there were two possible solutions. The first was the abandonment of the migrant labour policy, which could only be achieved through improvements in production techniques and the creation of a stabilised, skilled labour force. The second was to force extensive rural areas to engage in agricultural production. Thanks to the policy of compulsory cultivation, and thanks also to the fact that the railway network was finally completed on the eve of the Depression, Katanga's reliance on Northern Rhodesian labour and foodstuffs diminished until, with the onset of the Depression, it became marginal. In addition, the Depression, despite the Copperbelt's subsequent recovery, had rather profound effects on the African labourer. For, in a matter of months, the latter suddenly lost its leverage in the labour market. As a result, it appears that the Depression served to make the border more porous than it had been before. As employment opportunities dried up throughout southern Africa, people of all origins crisscrossed the border between Belgian and British Africa in search of better wages or better options of making money.

Unfortunately, neither the Belgian nor the British colonial government seem to have concerned themselves excessively with the numerical details of African migration in those early years. As a result, knowledge about the actual volume of labour migration in this period is patchy. Yet we may venture two large generalisations. First the master narrative that posits a clear-cut transition from the 'classic' short-term and cyclical migrant system to stabilisation and urbanisation, does not seem to be supported by the evidence. Instead of simple evolutionary dualisms, we are faced with complex shifts in patterns of mobility between urban and rural areas and between countries. Second, African migrants were by no means passive victims of an all-powerful mining industry. So far as possible, they chose their employer since both wages and working conditions varied considerably. This caused African labourers, artisans and hangers-on to crisscross the border for many decades, which they did without following any set pattern. As Luise White put it:

These movements must be added to the picture of African labour – the jigsaw puzzle again – (...) in which African workers' gossip passed on the latest information about the safest working conditions, the best living conditions, the best wages. Such talk sent African workers across cultural and colonial boundaries to work and to make money, where they found themselves in worlds and seams and stopes that had different safety records, different standards of living, and different rates of remuneration.¹⁴⁰

Although the region of the Copperbelt had already been the scene of many population movements in pre-colonial times, the allied effect of an artificial border and the implantation of two powerful, neighbouring *and* competing mining industries changed the nature and patterns

¹⁴⁰ White, 'Class struggle and cannibalism', 276.

of these movements. This new type of migration had, before anything else, an economic *raison d'être* and therefore transcended cultural boundaries.

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Wealth, Success, and Personhood: Trajectories of Labour Migration from Mwinilunga District, 1930s-1970s

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What were the causes and consequences of labour migration from Mwinilunga District between the 1930s and 1970s? Within Zambian historiography, economic and political aspects of labour migration have received much attention. Labour migration has been analysed within dichotomies of rural-urban, development-underdevelopment or tradition-modernity. Instead, this article proposes to bridge such dichotomies and to foreground the socio-cultural dispositions behind labour migration. If mobility is viewed as a social, rather than a geographical practice, connections and long-term continuities come to light. Through the case of Mwinilunga District the causes, motives and effects of labour migration will be examined. Why did individuals decide to migrate, how did they spend their earnings and did they retain contact with their 'home' areas? In Mwinilunga labour migration could function as a strategy to realise aspirations, develop relationships and enhance ones status. It could be a pathway towards wealth, success and personhood. A focus on self-realisation proposes an alternative perspective which places labour migration within the broader context of social connectivity, stressing the variety of migrant trajectories and the interconnections between rural and urban fortunes.

Kwenda kumona nzovu – To travel is to see an elephant (Lunda proverb)¹

Introduction

In Mwinilunga District, located in the north-western tip of Zambia which borders Angola and Congo, mobility is part and parcel of life.² Whether for purposes of hunting, trade or to participate in the labour market, individuals have migrated over long distances to grasp opportunities.³ Mobility has been central to the socio-economic and political strategies of the population of Mwinilunga, even functioning as a marker of identity. If one travels one can see an elephant, attain wealth, success and advance personhood. Alternatively, people who just 'sit around' the village (*kushakama hohu*) are denounced and are not likely to obtain influence, status or power.⁴ Since the end of the nineteenth century, individuals from the area have moved, temporarily or for longer periods of time, to seek waged employment in urban areas, predominantly on the Congolese and Zambian Copperbelts.⁵ This article explores the dynamics of this movement, by looking at the causes and consequences of labour migration from Mwinilunga District between the 1930s and the 1970s.

¹ Proverb recorded by Gibby Kamuhuza, Ikelenge, April 2010.

² O. Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating or migrating villagers? A study of movement from North West Zambia to Angola' (PhD thesis, University of Bath, 1999); V. W. Turner, *Schism and continuity in an African society: A study of Ndembu village life* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1957).

³ See: F. De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia: The mutant hero in the historical imagination of a Central-African diamond frontier', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 1, no. 2 (2000).

⁴ Interview with Justin Kambidima, Ntambu, 22 October 2010.

⁵ J. A. Pritchett, *The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, change and social transformation in South Central Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); A. von Oppen, *Terms of trade and terms of trust: The history and contexts of pre-colonial market production around the upper Zambezi and Kasai* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1994).

In Zambian historiography, questions of labour migration, its effects on migrants and on rural sending areas, have been fervently debated over the course of the twentieth century.⁶ Most influentially, the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) has linked labour migration to processes of social change.⁷ On the one hand, the historiography has interpreted labour migration within a 'modernist narrative', 'a metanarrative of transition, in which tribal rural Africans were swiftly becoming modern, urban members of an industrial society'.⁸ Such narratives have associated labour migration with 'modernity', enhancing 'development' and 'progress'.⁹ Even if labour migration could provide access to waged employment and material gain, it has, on the other hand, been connected to more negative processes of 'proletarianisation', 'detrribalisation' and rural decay.¹⁰ In these debates, polarising dichotomies of urban and rural, development and underdevelopment, and modernity and tradition have all too often been applied.¹¹ Rather than through such dichotomies, which adopt an overtly economic and political lens, this article argues that labour migration should be analysed as the outcome of socio-cultural dispositions, as a means towards self-realisation.¹² If mobility is viewed as a social, rather than a purely geographical practice, connections and long-term continuities come to light.¹³ Instead of being transformative, mobility could serve to diversify and secure livelihoods, maximise opportunities, build personhood and give shape to the locality. By viewing labour migration as a

⁶ See especially: J. Ferguson, 'Mobile workers, modernist narratives: A critique of the historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 16, no. 3 (1990), 385-412 and 16, no. 4 (1990), 603-21; H. Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition on the Zambian Copperbelt: Another view', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, no. 4 (1993), 681-712; D. Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt? Interpretations and implications', *Urban Studies*, 42, no. 2 (2005), 583-609.

⁷ See: A. L. Epstein, 'Urbanization and social change in Africa', *Current Anthropology*, 8, no. 4 (1967), 275-95; J. Clyde Mitchell, 'The causes of labour migration', *Inter-African Labour Institute Bulletin*, 6, no. 1 (1959), 12-47.

⁸ J. Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity: Myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), 33.

⁹ More generally: J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen, 'The mobility transition revisited, 1500-1900: What the case of Europe can offer to global history', *Journal of Global History*, 4, no. 3 (2009), 347-77; A. de Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration - a critical review of the migration literature', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 36, no. 2 (1999), 1-47.

¹⁰ G. Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective: A study of proletarianization of the African peasantry in Rhodesia', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 6, no. 3 (1969-70), 197-234; N. Plange, 'Opportunity cost' and labour migration: A misinterpretation of proletarianisation in Northern Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17, no. 4 (1979), 655-76; S. Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence in black Africa: Historical origin', *Journal of Peace Research*, 9 (1972), 105-19; B. O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods: Forced labour and resistance in colonial Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, no. 3 (2002), 511-30; see also RLI work: A. I. Richards, *Land, labour and diet in Northern Rhodesia: An economic study of the Bemba tribe* (London: Oxford UP, 1939).

¹¹ J. A. Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge and state control in colonial Zimbabwe: The invention of the rural-urban divide in Buhera District, 1912-80', *Journal of African History*, 43, no. 1 (2002), 119-43; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

¹² Inspiration for this approach has been taken from: J. A. Andersson, 'Re-interpreting the rural-urban connection: Migration practices and socio-cultural dispositions of Buhera workers in Harare', *Africa* 71, no. 1 (2001), 82-112. See the discussion on self-realisation below.

¹³ I. Kopytoff, 'The internal African frontier: The making of African political culture', in I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African frontier: The reproduction of traditional African societies* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), 22; J. A. Andersson, 'Informal moves, informal markets: International migrants and traders from Mzimba, Malawi', *African Affairs*, 105, no. 420 (2006), 375-97.

strategy towards self-realisation, existing debates in Zambian historiography might be approached from a different perspective.¹⁴

This article examines the effects of labour migration in one rural area. How did labour migration influence Mwinilunga District between the 1930s and the 1970s, and how might looking at labour migration from Mwinilunga further the understanding of the dynamics of Zambian labour migration?¹⁵ This case study examines the causes, motives and effects of labour migration, looking at the interrelationship between rural and urban areas. It will be argued that rather than belonging to the impoverished masses, who lacked the resources to migrate to urban areas in the first place, migrants were part of the more educated and prosperous segments of rural society. It will be explored why individuals decided to migrate, how they spent their earnings and whether they retained contact with 'home' areas. By examining patterns of labour migration through the analytical lens of self-realisation, it will be proposed that individual interests – more than economic or political factors – shaped migrant trajectories. A focus on self-realisation enables an alternative understanding of Zambian labour migration, by challenging the 'modernist narrative', notions of development and underdevelopment and the discursive rural-urban divide.¹⁶

Reassessing Perspectives on Labour Migration

In Zambian historiography and social sciences, labour migration has been much discussed. According to James Ferguson, Zambian labour migration has predominantly been understood within a 'modernist narrative', as 'the progressive, stage-wise emergence of a stable, settled urban working class'.¹⁷ Allegedly, labour migration developed through a number of 'stages', whereby an initial phase of short-term and circulatory migration was replaced by partial stabilisation of labour and eventually by permanent urbanisation.¹⁸ This view proposes that lone male migrants were increasingly supplanted by migrating families, including women and children.¹⁹ Furthermore, the 'modernist narrative' suggests that ties between rural and urban areas were gradually severed, as migrants settled in town for longer periods of time.²⁰ 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'.²¹ In this sense, the movement between rural and urban areas becomes a transformative act of social change. The stage-like progression of the 'modernist

¹⁴ Research was conducted in Zambia in 2008 and 2010. Archival research in the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), the United National Independence Party archives (UNIPA), Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines archives (ZCCM) and the Rhodes House library in Oxford, UK (BOD), was combined with oral interviews conducted by the author. Elderly labour migrants have been interviewed in order to record their life histories and experiences.

¹⁵ See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*.

¹⁶ See: Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

¹⁷ Ferguson, 'Mobile workers', 385.

¹⁸ Ferguson, 'Mobile workers'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

¹⁹ 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, no. 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, no. 2 (1980-81), 135-64.

²⁰ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; P. Geschiere and J. Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection: Changing issues of belonging and identification', *Africa*, 68, no. 3 (1998), 309-19.

²¹ Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 89; See: J. Ferguson, 'The Country and the City on the Copperbelt', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, no. 1 (1992), 80-92.

narrative' has been fundamentally contested recently.²² Ferguson himself provided a critique of the modernist narrative, whereas Hugh Macmillan argued that the RLI had never adopted a 'modernist narrative' in the first place. After the heated debate between Ferguson and Macmillan in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* in the 1990s, a number of detailed local and regional studies of labour migration have been published, which have challenged received wisdom.²³ Critics have suggested the co-existence of various patterns of migration, thereby questioning the idea of the 'typical migrant'.²⁴ Furthermore, the enduring ties between rural and urban areas, as well as recent trends of counter-urbanisation, disprove ideas of linear change.²⁵ By examining labour migration from Mwinilunga District, the 'modernist narrative' can be challenged on several points. First of all, migration from Mwinilunga followed a wide range of patterns rather than a linear trajectory from temporary migrant labourer to permanent urbanite. Secondly, ties between rural and urban areas have not been severed. To the contrary, labour migration might be seen in terms of social connectivity, establishing close and enduring links between rural and urban localities. Thirdly, the modernist narrative – as well as much subsequent historiography – 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.

Labour migration has often been explained as an outcome of the interests of capital and the state.²⁶ This structuralist economic perspective has prevailed, in particular, in debates concerning the impact of labour migration on the village setting. Accounts have suggested that labour migration would lead to either 'development' or 'underdevelopment' and 'rural decay'.²⁷ On the one hand, urbanisation and industrialisation could generate monetary income and wealth, leading to 'development'.²⁸ In Mwinilunga District, this positive association was acknowledged by colonial officials in the late 1930s: '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'.²⁹ In connection to this, labour migration might generate remittances and an increase in human capital, benefitting the area of origin by raising standards of living.³⁰ Nevertheless, the effects of labour migration remain ambiguous and debated. In a more negative

²² Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'; H.L. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting down trees: Gender, nutrition, and agricultural change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994); Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt?'

²³ For example: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; K. Crehan, *The fractured community: Landscapes of power and gender in rural Zambia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Also: J. Pottier, *Migrants no more: Settlement and survival in Mambwe villages, Zambia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988). For a broader Southern African perspective: G. Kanyenze, 'African migrant labour situation in Southern Africa', *ICFTU-AFRO Conference on Migrant Labour*, Nairobi, Kenya, 15-17 March 2004.

²⁴ Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; But see also: H. Englund, 'The village in the city, the city in the village: Migrants in Lilongwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, no. 1 (2002), 137-54; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

²⁵ W. van Binsbergen, 'Globalization and virtuality: Analytical problems posed by the contemporary transformation of African societies', *Development and Change*, 29, no. 4 (1998), 873-903; Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt?'

²⁶ T. Sunseri, 'Labour migration in colonial Tanzania and the hegemony of South African historiography', *African Affairs*, 95, no. 381 (1996), 581-98; J-B. Gewald, 'Researching and writing in the twilight of an imagined conquest: Anthropology in Northern Rhodesia, 1930-1960', *History and Anthropology*, 18, no. 4 (2007), 459-87.

²⁷ See: De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

²⁸ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*, 33; F. Cooper (ed.), *Struggle for the city: Migrant labor, capital, and the state in urban Africa* (Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi: Sage, 1983), 12.

²⁹(NAZ) SEC2/153, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1939.

³⁰ De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 21.

way, labour migration has been connected to issues of underdevelopment and proletarianisation.³¹ According to such views, widespread rural poverty propelled individuals to earn money through labour migration, yet migration and waged employment equally divorced workers from an independent means of production in the form of land. This process would make workers increasingly dependent on the capitalist sector and would aggravate the impoverishment of rural 'labour reserves', which had been depleted of the workforce needed to till the land.³² Scepticism about the negative effects of labour migration on rural society in Mwinilunga District has been voiced by colonial and post-colonial officials as well as by Victor Turner, a renowned anthropologist of the RLI, who 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'.³³

The economic and political aspects of labour migration have thus been foregrounded, whilst personal motives, aspirations and trajectories have remained underrepresented.³⁴ Nevertheless, 'state and capital did not determine migratory movements', but rather 'migrants' own initiative' shaped practices of labour migration.³⁵ Moving away from existing interpretations of labour migration, mobility might more usefully be seen as a process towards self-realisation, because 'mobility and migration may have been about recruitment of skills'.³⁶ In the area of Mwinilunga, a person could become valued within the community through mobility, attaining status, wealth and respect among peers.³⁷ Individuals sought 'the acknowledgement, regard, and attention of other people – which was the basis of reputation and influence, and thus constitutive of social being'.³⁸ 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'.³⁹ 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'. 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'.⁴⁰ 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'.⁴¹

In Mwinilunga District, labour migration could be an integral part of building one's career. Yet, labour migration is only one among many strategies towards self-realisation, which include

³¹ See: Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'; Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective'.

³² Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'; Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective'.

³³ Turner, *Schism and continuity*, 17.

³⁴ There has been recent work on the personal motives and aspirations for labour migration, but this has not been applied to this period and area. See, for example: B. Whitehouse, *Migrants and strangers in an African city: Exile, dignity, belonging* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2012).

³⁵ Andersson, 'Informal moves', 386-7.

³⁶ J. I. Guyer and S. M. Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge: Accumulation and composition in Equatorial Africa', *Journal of African History*, 36, no. 1 (1995), 115.

³⁷ See: J. I. Guyer, 'Wealth in people and self-realization in Equatorial Africa', *Man*, 28, no. 2 (1993), 243-65; F. de Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars: Identity, expenditure and sharing in Southwestern Zaire (1984-1997)', *Development and Change*, 29, no. 4 (1998), 777-810; De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

³⁸ K. Barber, 'Money, self-realization and the person in Yoruba texts', in: J. I. Guyer (ed.), *Money matters: Instability, values and social payments in the modern history of West African communities* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995), 216.

³⁹ Guyer, 'Wealth in people and self-realization', 255.

⁴⁰ De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'.

⁴¹ Englund, 'The village in the city', 137.

agricultural production, hunting and trade.⁴² That is why labour migration should be analysed in its full societal setting. Work is 'a positive aspect of human activity, and is expressed in the making of self and others in the course of everyday life'.⁴³ Labour migration did not primarily serve to attain wealth, but was geared towards social standing. Self-realisation, far from being an individual pursuit, proved a thoroughly social undertaking. One could only make a name for oneself in relation to others.⁴⁴ For the context of Mwinilunga, Turner explained that 'a man can acquire wealth by working in the White economy as a wage labourer', but 'it seems often (...) to be the aim of returned labour-migrants (...) to obtain influence and subsequently office, in traditional villages'. Turner concluded that most labour migrants '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'.⁴⁵ Next to placing an emphasis on personal ambitions and aspirations towards self-realisation, this statement questions the dichotomy between rural and urban areas. Even if labour migration involved physical mobility and a (temporary) movement away from the village, it was not necessarily a transformative act. Rather, labour migration could be a means to acquire wealth and influence within the village, by becoming a 'Big Man' and building wealth in people.⁴⁶ In this sense, 'the rural and the urban constitute a single social universe encompassing both rural and urban geographical spheres'.⁴⁷ Becoming a 'Big Man' and gaining the respect of others was the ultimate aim of successful individuals, and this aim could be attained through labour migration as income-earning opportunities within the village remained limited. In order to understand why viewing labour migration as part of the process towards self-realisation might advance debates within Zambian historiography, the dynamics of labour migration from Mwinilunga District will first be explored.

Origins and Patterns of Labour Migration

In Mwinilunga District, labour migration built on long-established patterns of mobility, notions of work and employment. In the nineteenth century, men from this area had already found employment as caravan porters, at mission stations or at mines and farms in Congo, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the scope of colonial labour migration differentiated it from previous patterns of work and mobility. Labour migration ratios from Mwinilunga District increased steadily over 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 56% in 1960.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ Post-colonial

⁴² Bakewell, 'Refugees repatriating'; Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge', 105.

⁴³ J. L. and J. Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant: Work and labor in the historical consciousness of a South African people', *American Ethnologist*, 14, no. 2 (1987), 197.

⁴⁴ De Boeck, 'Borderland breccia'; De Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars'.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Schism and continuity*, 135.

⁴⁶ See: Guyer, 'Wealth in people as self-realization'; J. C. Miller, *Way of death: Merchant capitalism and the Angolan slave trade 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

⁴⁷ Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 84.

⁴⁸ See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

⁴⁹ (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. The reliability of these figures is of course doubtful, see: B. Fetter, *Demography from scanty evidence: Central Africa in the colonial era* (Boulder etc., 1990).

⁵⁰ For the post-independence period: D. S. Johnson (ed.), *Handbook to the North-Western Province 1980* (Lusaka, 1980), 74; 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*

government policies, lifting colonial restrictions on mobility and relaxing regulations on urban residence, caused Zambia to 'reap the whirlwind'. Rural populations flocked to the towns, because 'everyone wanted to come to urban areas in search of work, pleasure or even schooling'.⁵¹ Only after 1980 were there signs of diminishing rural outmigration, or even counter-urbanisation, as the (inter)national economic downturn caused a glut in urban employment and redirected migration flows away from the Copperbelt towards the capital city Lusaka, district centres such as Mwinilunga Township and to rural areas.⁵² The length of service showed an increase over time, but fluctuated considerably according to individual cases. Whereas in 1935 a taxable man would on average work 0.75 months a year, in the 1950s labour migrants would stay away at their place of employment for an average of four years.⁵³ Even then, however, some would work for several months, whereas others would remain in town their entire life.

The causes and motives for labour migration were manifold and interrelated. The factors stressed most frequently and forcefully in the historiography pertain to the economic sphere.⁵⁴ Labour migration has been understood as the outcome of 'push' and 'pull' factors, being driven by relative poverty and a lack of opportunities in rural areas (push factors), whilst being attracted by a growing demand for labour in industrialised urban areas (pull factors).⁵⁵ Economic explanations for migration have been proposed at both individual and structural levels.⁵⁶ Labour migrants are either seen as acting individually, according to a rationale of economic self-interest and profit maximisation.⁵⁷ Or labour migration is seen as the structural outcome of global capitalism.⁵⁸ 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', effected through taxation and state coercion, was already underway.⁵⁹ This process would result in the formation of rural 'labour reserves', a 'rural-urban divide', but might also potentially lead to development.⁶⁰ Although other factors should be taken into consideration, economic factors are indeed important in explaining patterns of labour migration from Mwinilunga District. Colonial officials identified the need to earn a monetary income, especially for purposes of taxation, as the driving force behind migration from Mwinilunga District. Officials complained about 'the exodus of the younger generation to gain what may be termed "easy money" by work

1969 census (Manchester, 1973). Based on the 1969 census Ohadike and Jackman calculated 'expected growth rates', concluding that -2.6% and -3.8% respectively were due to out-migration from Mwinilunga District.

⁵¹ (NAZ) HM77/PP/2, P. W. Matoka, A Contribution to the Media Resource Center Freedom Forum, 08 November 1997 – Review of Zambia's 33 Years of Independence.

⁵² Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt?'; D. Potts, 'Shall we go home? Increasing urban poverty in African cities and migration processes', *The Geographical Journal*, 161, no. 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, no. 3 (1988), 271-92.

⁵³ (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.

⁵⁴ Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Sunseri, 'Labour migration in colonial Tanzania'.

⁵⁵ O. Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place': The ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 29, no. 7 (2008), 1345; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

⁵⁶ See also: J. Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2007).

⁵⁷ O'Laughlin, 'Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods'.

⁵⁸ Amin, 'Underdevelopment and dependence'.

⁵⁹ Plange, 'Opportunity cost and labour migration', 661.

⁶⁰ See: Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective'.

on the mines', stating that 'the earning capacity of the native has increased enormously and must continue to grow – more money creating fresh wants'.⁶¹

Migrants viewed opportunities in urban areas in relation to those in rural areas, as officials noted: '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'.⁶² Throughout the twentieth century, money-earning and employment options within Mwinilunga District generally remained limited.⁶³ The consequent 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.⁶⁴

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.⁶⁵ Even in the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, when an agricultural boom prevailed and crops could easily be marketed in Mwinilunga District, officials noted that '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'.⁶⁶

After independence, migrants continued to judge urban attractions in the light of rural realities. Government reports from the 1970s lamented that:

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.⁶⁷

Although employment proved difficult to obtain in towns, especially from the late 1970s onwards, urban areas still held relative attractions vis-à-vis rural areas.⁶⁸ These attractions had to do with national income disparities, which could be substantial in certain years. In 1968, for example, Zambian mineworkers earned K1300 a year, urban wage earners K640, whereas peasant farmers earned a meagre K145 a year.⁶⁹ Official reports stated that 'rapidly increasing prices for consumer goods and cost of production, on the one hand, and stagnant or even

⁶¹ (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol. 1, D. C. Hughes-Chamberlain, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 December 1929.

⁶² (NAZ) North-Western Province African Provincial Council, April 1958.

⁶³ Turner and Turner, 'Money economy'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

⁶⁴ (NAZ) SEC2/955 H. B. Waugh, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 11 October 1940.

⁶⁵ (NAZ) SEC2/137, F. R. G. Phillips, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1954.

⁶⁶ (NAZ) NWP1/2/102 Loc.4919, E. L. Button, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1960.

⁶⁷ (UNIPA) UNIP, A new strategy for rural development in Zambia, 1970.

⁶⁸ Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt?'

⁶⁹ (NAZ) Report of the Second National Convention on Rural Development: Incomes, Wages and Prices in Zambia, 12 December 1969.

declining producer prices, on the other, make farming not a very attractive proposition'.⁷⁰ The contrasts between rural and urban areas were posed in stark terms, of 'stagnation' as opposed to 'dynamism', or even 'tradition' versus 'modernity'.⁷¹ Such a 'dualism' was adopted in discourse and popular consciousness, being reflected in reports from the 1970s:

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.⁷²

Economic understandings of labour migration propose a stark dichotomy between rural and urban areas. Yet residence in urban areas was driven by rural realities, which encompassed more than just economic motivations. Labour migration could be underpinned by a 'desire to improve the conditions of life in villages'.⁷³

Moving beyond purely economic motives, labour migration could be a strategy to enhance the security and predictability of life for the inhabitants of Mwinilunga District.⁷⁴ It formed part of a diversity of livelihood options, existing next to agricultural production, animal husbandry and waged labour within the district.⁷⁵ Some individuals would migrate to town, marry there and would 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.⁷⁶ These diverse possibilities cannot be reduced to fixed stages as proposed by the 'modernist narrative'.⁷⁷ Even one individual could combine numerous patterns of movement within the course of a lifetime. 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*⁷⁸ in the same city for eight years. Thereafter, he continued his employment as a *capitao*, but moved to Kolwezi (Congo), where he was in employment for ten years. Subsequently, he worked at Nkana mine (Zambia) for six years, after which he returned to Mwinilunga District to work as a government *kapasu*⁷⁹ for six months. This employment history of 28.5 years straddles the boundaries between short-term migration and permanent 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. Over 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.⁸⁰ This life history defies the predictions made within the 'modernist narrative', suggesting the need for a different conceptual framework. Instead of being the outcome of economic push and

⁷⁰ (NAZ) A New Strategy for Rural Development in Zambia, 23 March 1970.

⁷¹ Ferguson, 'The country and the city', 80-92.

⁷² (UNIPA) UNIP Chairman of the Rural Development Committee, 22 September 1973.

⁷³ Englund, 'The village in the city', 137.

⁷⁴ Compare with: P. Harries, *Work, culture, and identity: Migrant laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994), 17.

⁷⁵ Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

⁷⁶ This view is based on oral interviews.

⁷⁷ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; Macmillan, 'The historiography of transition'; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

⁷⁸ *Capitao* is a Portuguese word and might be translated as 'overseer' or 'foreman'.

⁷⁹ *Kapasu* might be translated as 'messenger' or 'policeman'.

⁸⁰ (BOD) Richard Cranmer Denning Papers, 15 files, Uncatalogued, Notes from 1948. The *boma* is the administrative headquarters of the district, Mwinilunga Township.

pull factors, or being determined by state policies, labour migration might be better understood within the context of socio-economic dispositions towards self-realisation.⁸¹

Labour migration could be a 'deliberate strategy to accumulate wealth', rather than being a 'last resort' of impoverished rural producers who sought to generate tax money.⁸² Labour migration was not so much rooted in absolute rural poverty, but was driven by a desire to prosper in rural areas. In this sense, it could be part of a process towards self-realisation.⁸³ Colonial officials noted that: 'those at work are the younger, more energetic and more educated members of the population'.⁸⁴ 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'.⁸⁵ Resources are required in order to migrate. Not only knowledge, skills and material wealth, but social capital and personality have to be cultivated.⁸⁶ Application letters to the mines on the Zambian Copperbelt suggest that workers from Mwinilunga District aspired towards self-realisation. This was viewed as an inherently social achievement, involving family, kin and ideas of the nation. One applicant declared that: 'I would like to develop myself' as she wished to 'be able to look after my family'. She applied to the mines because 'it is one of the largest industries in Zambia which serves both the nation and neighbouring countries'.⁸⁷ Another applicant wanted to become 'successful', further wishing his 'career to grow into something which will make me support myself and the relatives who want support. Also my studies to be continued so as to strengthen my career'.⁸⁸ A third applicant 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'.⁸⁹ Educated and skilled individuals, who failed to find lucrative employment locally, would move to urban areas where opportunities were more readily available.⁹⁰ Not all mission-educated individuals, for example, could obtain employment as teachers or orderlies within Mwinilunga District. Consequently, large numbers would seek their luck on the Copperbelt or in the capital city Lusaka.⁹¹

The practice of labour migration contributed to the process of self-realisation in Mwinilunga District. Labour migration was driven not only by economic objectives, but encompassed ideology, culture and aspirations towards a 'good life'.⁹² Next to income disparities, differences

⁸¹ Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'; Englund, 'The village in the city'; Guyer, 'Wealth in people and self-realization', 243-65; Barber, 'Money, self-realization and the person', 205-24; De Boeck, 'Domesticating diamonds and dollars', 777-810.

⁸² Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge', 128.

⁸³ Englund, 'The village in the city', 151; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

⁸⁴ (NAZ) SEC2/966, C. J. Fryer, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 9 September 1958.

⁸⁵ Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1350; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty', 16-22.

⁸⁶ See: Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge'.

⁸⁷ (ZCCM) Rabby Sameta, Mine No. 76934, Loc. Y4.9A, Born 29.8.1952, Entered Service 21.8.1972, Left Service 1.12.1972.

⁸⁸ (ZCCM) Moses Kanjanja, Mine No. 82803, Loc. 18.1.5F, Born 18.08.1959, Entered Service 15.05.1979, Left Service 31.10.1992.

⁸⁹ (ZCCM) G. Sameta, Mine No. 80106, Loc. 16.4.2A, Born 15.2.1956, Entered Service 30.6.1975, Left Service 31.8.1994.

⁹⁰ Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; W. H. M. L. Hoppers, *Education in a rural society: Primary pupils and school leavers in Mwinilunga, Zambia* (The Hague, 1981).

⁹¹ W. S. Fisher and J. Hoyte, *Ndotolu: The life stories of Walter and Anna Fisher of Central Africa* (Ikelenge, 1992); 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).

⁹² 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*

in the provision of services (health care, education and leisure) between town and country were pronounced.⁹³ The 'bright lights' of the city acted as a magnet and the lifestyle in towns ('town life') propelled labour migration. 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'.⁹⁴ The 'beerhalls, tea rooms, and facilities for purchasing European food – all of which appeal to the village African', attracted workers from Mwinilunga to the Copperbelt.⁹⁵ Individuals consciously weighed terms of employment, conditions of service and other factors before taking up urban residence.⁹⁶ Urban and rural areas were viewed relationally. In urban areas wages were higher, whilst employment and leisure opportunities were more readily available than within Mwinilunga. This opened avenues towards self-realisation and motivated numerous individuals to migrate. Labour migration is a 'lifestyle (...) inspired by aspirations that do not simply envisage material accumulation', but are premised on socio-cultural dispositions.⁹⁷

Consumptive aspirations, a motive for mobility which has been neglected in much recent work, further bolstered the incentives to earn money and engage in labour migration from Mwinilunga District.⁹⁸ One 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.⁹⁹ Consumptive desires furthermore explain why recruiters offered blankets to prospective workers, and why these could be effective inducements to engage in labour contracts.¹⁰⁰ Consumption, however, was not a purely economic act, but was connected to social relationships and status.¹⁰¹ Migrant labourers did not only purchase clothing for themselves, but would distribute clothing to their kin in the village whilst on leave or they would bring back goods upon cessation of their contracts.¹⁰² Whilst working on the line of rail where consumer goods were cheaper than within Mwinilunga, labour migrants would 'buy what few cloths they require'.¹⁰³ Goods could function as a marker of social relationships but could also further goals of self-realisation by making wealthy migrants into 'Big Men'. Due to labour migration and the wealth this generated, consumer goods such as clothes, pots and pans became more widespread in the villages throughout Mwinilunga and demand for these goods increased.¹⁰⁴ Labour migration raised expectations of consumption and thereby further stimulated the need to earn money and migrate. Once consumer goods came to be regarded as necessities, consumptive aspirations

life in Central Africa: The history of consumption and social change, 1840-1980 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 93-113.

⁹³ H. Powdermaker, *Copper town: Changing Africa: The human situation on the Rhodesian Copperbelt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); G. Wilson, *An essay on the economics of detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1942); Parpart, 'Where is your mother?'

⁹⁴ (NAZ) SEC2/966, C. J. Fryer, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 14 November 1958.

⁹⁵ (NAZ) SEC2/957, A. Stockwell-Jones, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 30 January 1949.

⁹⁶ See: Harries, *Work, culture, and identity*; E. Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and the contours of colonial rule: African labor in Manica District, Mozambique, c. 1904-1908', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, no. 1 (2003), 59-82.

⁹⁷ Englund, 'The village in the city', 152; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

⁹⁸ See: 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: Brill, 2013), 2-3.

⁹⁹ Interview with Mr. Makajina, Ikelenge, March 2010.

¹⁰⁰ (NAZ) KSE1/1/1, R. W. Yule, 13 October 1915.

¹⁰¹ Barrett, 'Walking home majestically', 93-113.

¹⁰² See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*; V. W. Turner and E. L. B. Turner, 'Money economy among the Mwinilunga Ndembu: A study of some individual cash budgets', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 18 (1955), 19-37.

¹⁰³ (NAZ) F. V. Bruce-Miller, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1926.

¹⁰⁴ See: Wilson, *An essay on the economics of detribalization*.

provided an incentive towards labour migration.¹⁰⁵ Migrants' markers of economic success, in the form of clothing, a bicycle or a sewing machine, might entice others to pursue a migrant career as well.¹⁰⁶ Consumption could act as a self-propelling force behind labour migration, but this was only due to the linkages between consumption, social relationships and the process of self-realisation.¹⁰⁷

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'.¹⁰⁸ Whereas some 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.¹⁰⁹ Strategies towards self-realisation could be various, straddling the boundaries between rural and urban spheres.

Labour Migration and Village Life

Even more than the consequences of labour migration on individual trajectories, the historiographical debate has discussed the effects of labour migration on village society and the rural economy.¹¹⁰ Disconcertedly, colonial officials in Mwinilunga would complain that 'the mines can't "have it both ways", that is have cheap labour and at the same time expect an abundance of cheap food from the villages which they have depopulated'.¹¹¹ Because urban employment drained the labour force from rural areas, officials feared that urban and rural wealth could not coincide. Given prevailing labour bottlenecks, wage employment would jeopardise agricultural production.¹¹² That is why the male absenteeism due to outmigration and the supposedly deleterious effects this had on agricultural production and village make-up were cause for such serious distress among officials. In the 1950s, one official lamented that: 'there is a lack of men 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'.¹¹³ The potentially negative effects of labour migration on agricultural production had been noticed since the 1920s:

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

¹⁰⁵ (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol.1, D. C. Hughes-Chamberlain, Mwinilunga Sub-District Annual Report, 31 December 1929.

¹⁰⁶ Andersson, 'Informal moves', 393; Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

¹⁰⁷ Guyer, 'Wealth in people as self-realization'.

¹⁰⁸ Guyer and Eno Belinga, 'Wealth in people as wealth in knowledge', 93.

¹⁰⁹ This diversity has been explained by Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Turner and Turner, 'Money economy', 19-37; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

¹¹⁰ For a case study of a rural area, see: Richards, *Land, labour and diet*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; For labour migration and agricultural production, see: R. H. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds.), *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1977). This has been discussed in great detail for West Africa, see: Whitehouse, *Migrants and strangers in an African city*; de Bruijn, van Dijk & Foeken, *Mobile Africa*.

¹¹¹ (NAZ) SEC2/131 Vol. 2, E. Sharpe, Kasempa Province Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 1930.

¹¹² See: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 140-77; But: D. H. 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, no. 4 (2000), 807-32.

¹¹³ (NAZ) SEC2/959, K. J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, November 1951.

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.¹¹⁴

In this connection, officials anticipated that labour migration 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'.¹¹⁵ As a consequence, 'in the worst affected villages life just stagnates', and 'there is a great tendency for the houses occupied by their [labour migrants'] wives to be allowed to fall into a very dilapidated condition'.¹¹⁶ Officials overwhelmingly regarded the effects of labour migration on village life and agricultural production as detrimental. In the late 1940s a report stated that:

The greatest limiting factor [in rural development] 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.¹¹⁷

Rural decay and underdevelopment were attributed to policies of urban bias, as high wages would attract disproportionate labour force from rural to urban areas.¹¹⁸ In order to lessen rural-urban income disparities, especially after independence, government policy rhetorically 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'.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, these views of rural decay, disruption or even breakdown do not seem to be in congruence with the rapid increase in agricultural production and the boom in marketing throughout Mwinilunga District in the 1940s, 1950s and much of the 1960s.¹²⁰ In spite of the drain on village labour force as a result of high levels of outmigration, agricultural production flourished and rural life seemed to prosper. In recent years, more cautious voices in the historiography have suggested that migration to towns did not necessarily result in rural decay.¹²¹ In exceptional cases, rather, labour migration could prove compatible with high levels of agricultural production and rural prosperity, as the case of Mwinilunga suggests.¹²² Whereas during the opening decades of the twentieth century the marketing of crops in Mwinilunga District had been confined to administrative and local requirements, from the 1940s onwards as much as 600 tons of cassava, in addition to other (cash) crops, were marketed each year. Demand from urban areas, where the copper boom caused heightened food requirements,

¹¹⁴ (NAZ) Northern Rhodesia Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1929.

¹¹⁵ (NAZ) SEC2/962, R. S. Thompson, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 16 September 1954.

¹¹⁶ (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.

¹¹⁷ (NAZ) SEC2/155, Western Province Annual Report, 1948.

¹¹⁸ See: Potts, 'Counter-urbanization on the Zambian Copperbelt?'; Jamal and Weeks, 'The vanishing rural-urban gap'.

¹¹⁹ (NAZ) Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture for the Year 1965.

¹²⁰ Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*; Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

¹²¹ See: W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982); Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*; Pottier, *Migrants no more*.

¹²² Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 155.

motivated this increase in production and marketing, which was possible despite male labour migration ratios of more than 50%.¹²³ Whilst some officials in Mwinilunga District complained about the lack of 'able bodied men' in the villages, others noted that notwithstanding high levels of absenteeism there were relatively few signs of disruption in the villages.¹²⁴ How might this paradox be explained? Rather than understanding rural-urban relations as dichotomous, attention should be paid to interconnections between rural and urban spheres.

Labour migration has all too often been viewed as an exit option for impoverished agricultural producers who fail to find market outlets locally.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, 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 seem to 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'.¹²⁶ Indeed, labour migration ratios from the area around the mission station Kalene Hill have always been relatively high, even though education levels and income-generating opportunities are favourable when compared to other parts of Mwinilunga District.¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸ Migration is rooted 'not so much in the poor rural living conditions as in migrants' desire to prosper in the rural areas'.¹²⁹ Agricultural production and labour migration were not conflicting strategies, but could coincide. Whereas some individuals might focus on marketing pineapples within Mwinilunga District, others would seek to develop personhood by building a career in urban areas. Because labour migration allowed skilled individuals to enhance existing opportunities, the practice could contribute to rural sustainability and prosperity, rather than leading to breakdown or decay. Labour migrants might invest in agriculture upon their return, or they might facilitate the marketing of agricultural produce in urban areas.¹³⁰ Rather than causing impoverishment or rural decay, labour migration could stimulate rural entrepreneurship and prosperity.¹³¹

Viewing labour migration as part of the process towards self-realisation can bridge the rural-urban dichotomy at the basis of theories of both development and underdevelopment.¹³² If labour migration is interpreted as a social strategy to attain wealth and power, the focus lies not so much on the disruptive act of geographical mobility, but on the links which migrants create through a complex network of cultural, economic, social and political relations.¹³³ Migrants 'often see their stay in town through the prism of their rural aspirations'.¹³⁴ Even though labour

¹²³ See: 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: Brill, 2012), 169-90. In the 1960s demand slumped again, as long transport hauls made marketing from Mwinilunga District unprofitable.

¹²⁴ (NAZ) SEC2/959, K. J. Forder, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, November 1951.

¹²⁵ Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; See: Palmer and Parsons, *The roots of rural poverty*.

¹²⁶ Englund, 'The village in the city', 139.

¹²⁷ Fisher and Hoyte, *Ndotolu*; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*; Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

¹²⁸ See: De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

¹²⁹ Englund, 'The village in the city', 151.

¹³⁰ I. Peša, 'Buying pineapples, selling cloth: Traders and trading stores in Mwinilunga District, 1940-1970', 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: Brill, 2013), 259-80.

¹³¹ Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'; De Haan, 'Livelihoods and poverty'.

¹³² Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

¹³³ Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place', 1347.

¹³⁴ Englund, 'The village in the city', 153.

migration might lead to permanent urban residence, the practice is underpinned by rural realities, resulting in the 'simultaneous and overlapping presence of urban and rural spaces in migrants' lives'.¹³⁵ Over time individuals have sought to complement and enhance existing livelihood strategies within Mwinilunga District through labour migration. In an attempt to build one's career and establish personhood, avenues to wealth and success have been sought in either rural or urban localities.¹³⁶ Because labour migration enhanced existing opportunities towards self-realisation, it could serve to constitute the locality of Mwinilunga.

Contradicting views of rural decay and underdevelopment, some officials noticed 'comparatively little outward signs of disorganisation', despite high levels of outmigration from Mwinilunga District.¹³⁷ Labour migration could be an alternative, complementary strategy to agricultural production, aiming to make rural life more secure. Rather than being disruptive, waged employment could contribute to agricultural production through remittances and agricultural investments made by returning labour migrants.¹³⁸ In Mwinilunga District markets for agricultural produce were volatile and generally limited. In this setting, labour migration could serve to cushion the fluctuations of agricultural production and marketing, whilst providing additional income.¹³⁹ As colonial officials acknowledged, 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.¹⁴⁰

Instead of a stark rural-urban dichotomy, rural and urban areas might more usefully be viewed as two sides of the same coin.¹⁴¹ By straddling the boundaries of both, migrants sought to maximise opportunities and increase livelihood security. There is, thus, a 'mutual dependence between urban and rural fortunes'.¹⁴² Remittances, the opportunity of schooling relatives in town, or assistance in obtaining urban employment, all contributed to rural diversification and security, rather than decay.¹⁴³

Remittances in money and in goods have been taken as a main sign of enduring rural-urban connections.¹⁴⁴ Interpreted within debates of development and underdevelopment, migrant remittances have predominantly been judged for their economic importance.¹⁴⁵ In this connection, colonial officials painted a grim picture for the area of Mwinilunga, as migrants did not seem interested in remitting money. While migrants were in employment in urban areas, remittances and contact with kin would generally remain minimal.¹⁴⁶ Long transport hauls and

¹³⁵ Englund, 'The village in the city', 142; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 84.

¹³⁶ Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

¹³⁷ (NAZ) SEC2/133, N. S. Price, Mwinilunga District Annual Report, 31 December 1937.

¹³⁸ Turner and Turner, 'Money economy'; See also: Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*, 172-7; Pottier, *Migrants no more*.

¹³⁹ Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndemba*.

¹⁴⁰ (NAZ) SEC2/157, Western Province Annual Report, 1950.

¹⁴¹ Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

¹⁴² Englund, 'The village in the city', 149.

¹⁴³ Andersson, 'Informal moves'; Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection'.

¹⁴⁴ Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'.

¹⁴⁵ 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, no. 122 (2009), 499-517.

¹⁴⁶ See: Turner, *Schism and continuity*.

the difficulty of communication with Mwinilunga District made that remittances tended to be infrequent and limited, as officials remarked:

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.¹⁴⁷

Officials lamented the loose ties between labour migrants and their kin in the villages, as 'they return seldom, and remit money and clothes never'.¹⁴⁸ Remittances did not seem to be migrants' primary concern: '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'.¹⁴⁹ Rather than remitting on a regular basis, migrants would carry goods or money as gifts or investment capital upon their return. Yet remittances are but one aspect of the ties between migrants and their home areas. Patterns of remitting should be placed within their broader societal context.

Some labour migrants contributed to agricultural production in the form of investment in inputs, such as fertiliser, hoes or axes.¹⁵⁰ If labour migrants invested their earnings in agricultural production upon return, they might expand production and start marketing crops on a large scale within several years. Official concerns that labour migration would jeopardise agricultural production, for 'if people are away from their village for six months or more they cannot cultivate proper gardens', appeared unwarranted.¹⁵¹ Numerous pineapple farmers, for example, used their earnings from urban waged employment as starting capital to buy suckers or to engage labour to prepare fields.¹⁵² Migrants earned cash incomes and these could be invested in productive enterprises in rural areas. As a result, labour migration might lead to increased rural living standards. In the 1950s, within a time span of five years, the District Commissioner 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'.¹⁵³ Government officials on occasion credited migrant labourers as agents of 'development'.¹⁵⁴ One District Commissioner stated that: 'returning workers bring with them, as a rule, higher standards of housing and some ideas about gardening for pleasure'.¹⁵⁵ Migrant labour could be a means of self-realisation which straddled rural-urban divides, as Turner acknowledged. Returning labour migrants could play a role in diversifying rural livelihoods or creating an environment conducive for enterprise, but this was 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

¹⁴⁷ (NAZ) SEC2/957, R. N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 6 March 1949.

¹⁴⁸ (NAZ) NWP1/2/26 Loc.4901, R. N. Lines, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 10 January 1949.

¹⁴⁹ (NAZ) SEC2/151, Western Province Annual Report, 1937.

¹⁵⁰ Turner and Turner, 'Money economy'; Pritchett, *Lunda-Ndembu*.

¹⁵¹ (NAZ) KSE6/3/1, Mwinilunga Sub-District Indaba, 13 October 1916.

¹⁵² Peša, 'Buying pineapples, selling cloth'.

¹⁵³ (NAZ) SEC2/966, R. J. Short, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, July 1958.

¹⁵⁴ See: Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*; Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting down trees*.

¹⁵⁵ (NAZ) SEC2/967, R. J. Short, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, May 1959.

tailors, others start 'tea-rooms' on the motor roads, and others again become hawkers and small traders.¹⁵⁶

What this excerpt evidences is that labour migration should not be interpreted as an individual pursuit leading to personal wealth. Migrants would distribute earnings among kin upon their return to the village, even if they had not regularly sent remittances whilst in employment. Furthermore, earnings from urban employment could be used to support and advance rural livelihoods. Urban wealth might be translated into rural farming enterprises, trade or other businesses. Urban and rural strategies should therefore not be seen as detached. Rather than acting as individual agents, migrants depended on social relationships which straddled the rural-urban divide. Material wealth had to be translated into success for only then could a migrant become a 'Big Man', either in rural or urban areas.¹⁵⁷ The realisation of this goal depended on the careful cultivation of skills and relationships, on a personal following and social connectivity. In this sense, labour migration is motivated by a desire to gain wealth and influence in either rural or urban areas, a desire towards self-realisation.¹⁵⁸ Self-realisation should be seen as a process through which individuals could enhance their social standing through connectivity with others. Monetary earnings could increase one's social standing and labour migration provided one avenue to earn wealth.

Still, labour migration did not create a dynamic of economic growth or development. Even though 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 entailed risks as well.¹⁵⁹ 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. The narrative of *Kabalabala* embodies this sense of both opportunity and risk involved in labour migration:

Kabalabala, a man who lived along the Kabompo River, possessed charms with which he could turn himself into a lion. People who walked long distances would get tired and would rest along the road, where they would erect temporary shelters to spend the night. Especially those travellers returning from the towns to their villages would 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 travellers' camp, steal all their belongings and kill one or more members of the travelling group. Clothing, pots and all other goods would be taken from the travellers by Kabalabala, who would sell these items for money. This made travelling to and from town dangerous, because Kabalabala could not be killed by spears, axes or guns. Travellers not only risked losing their belongings, but might die if attacked by Kabalabala.¹⁶⁰

This narrative evidences that wealth is not merely economic, but also social. Wealth is inherently risky and has to be translated into social success in order to become legitimate. This can be done by distributing wealth among kin, neighbours and friends. Labour migration could

¹⁵⁶ Turner and Turner, 'Money economy', 23.

¹⁵⁷ Barrett, 'Walking home majestically'.

¹⁵⁸ Englund, 'The village in the city', 151.

¹⁵⁹ Comaroff, 'The madman and the migrant', explore the negative consequences of labour migration for individuals.

¹⁶⁰ Compilation from several interviews, especially Minas Kantumoya Kasolu Kachacha, Kanongesha, 27 July 2010 and Fred Mpenji, Kanongesha, 03 August 2010. For comparable cases of vampires on the Copperbelt, see: L. White, *Speaking with vampires: Rumor and history in colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

be a strategy towards self-realisation, but it also entailed a loss of labour force within the village. Kin who remained behind in the village might benefit from migrant remittances, but they might also make claims which a migrant could not meet, resulting in grudges, witchcraft accusations and narratives such as *Kabalabala*. Wealth could thus be dangerous, as much as it was beneficial. The outcome of labour migration might be 'the creation of wealth that can grow over time', but migrants' wealth and success had to be translated into social status within the community, expressed through self-realisation and social connectivity.¹⁶¹

Labour migration could enable individual wealth and success, being a pathway towards self-realisation. Some returning migrants who had accumulated 'considerable savings' might become 'Big Men', if they deployed their savings to diversify agricultural livelihoods, engage in craft production or trade.¹⁶² But because self-realisation is an inherently social process which occurs in relation to others, labour migration inevitably influenced rural communities as a whole. Colonial officials attributed material gain and improved living standards in the villages to migrants' engagement in the flourishing urban economy, suggesting the thoroughly intertwined nature between rural and urban fortunes:

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.¹⁶³

Officials noted that returning labour migrants made a definite impact on village life: 'The return to the villages of people who have been working for numerous years on the Copperbelt, was most marked'. Yet officials equally feared that this influence would merely encourage further migration, or that migrants' stories 'might be detrimental to efforts at stimulation of the production of an economic crop'.¹⁶⁴ Labour migration might influence village societies either positively or negatively, yet the relationship between rural and urban areas did not have to be conflicting, but could be symbiotic.

Labour migrants viewed urban residence through the prism of rural aspirations. Consequently it becomes crucial to look at social connectivity and at aims towards self-realisation in order to understand the dynamics of labour migration from Mwinilunga District. Labour migration was not so much transformative, but could prove constitutive of rural life:

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 an 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.¹⁶⁵

Not all migrants returned to their village of origin. 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 in the *Boma* where employment opportunities, trade avenues and social amenities were more favourable than in the villages.¹⁶⁶ Even so, labour migration should be seen as a strategy which connected rural and urban areas, rather than dividing them. Although some migrants severed ties to rural areas,

¹⁶¹ J. H. Cohen and I. Sirkeci, *Cultures of migration: The global nature of contemporary mobility* (Austin, 2011), 31.

¹⁶² (NAZ) SEC2/966, M. A. Hinds, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 22 September 1958.

¹⁶³ (NAZ) SEC2/155, Western Province Annual Report, 1948.

¹⁶⁴ (NAZ) SEC2/957, A. Stockwell-Jones, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 30 January 1949.

¹⁶⁵ Englund, 'The village in the city', 153.

¹⁶⁶ Turner, *Schism and continuity*; Turner and Turner, 'Money economy'.

most sought to enhance social standing by cultivating both rural and urban linkages. Instead of leading to rural impoverishment, labour migration enhanced opportunities within rural areas by offering a means towards self-realisation.

Conclusion

By looking at the case of labour migration from Mwinilunga District between the 1930s and the 1970s, it has been argued that examining trajectories of labour migration through the analytical lens of self-realisation might advance our understanding of Zambian labour migration. First of all, viewing labour migration as a strategy towards self-realisation places this form of mobility within its full societal context. Labour migration is not just propelled by an economic rationale or political necessity, but builds upon socio-cultural dispositions, which are crucial to a proper understanding of the dynamics of mobility.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, a focus on self-realisation enables the bridging of the discursive rural-urban divide, which has been proposed so forcefully in the historiography hitherto.¹⁶⁸ Even if some migrants did eventually sever ties with rural areas, urban residence was fundamentally driven by rural realities. It therefore becomes crucial to look at rural-urban interconnections.¹⁶⁹ Thirdly, this approach allows an understanding of the relative attractions of urban vis-à-vis 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.¹⁷⁰ Most importantly, this approach does not stress the transformative aspects of labour migration, but suggests that the practice might have been constitutive of rural society in Mwinilunga District. In this sense, a focus on self-realisation can challenge the 'modernist narrative', which proposes sharp ruptures and linear stages of labour migration.¹⁷¹ A focus on self-realisation proposes an alternative perspective which places labour migration within the broader context of social connectivity.

Within Mwinilunga District labour migration functioned as a strategy to realise aspirations, develop relationships and enhance status. Nevertheless, labour migration should not be interpreted as a straightforward strategy of economic development. Neither does the framework of the 'modernist narrative' apply. There were considerable variations in worker strategies, some planning to retire in rural areas, others choosing to remain in town indefinitely: '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'.¹⁷² In order to understand the dynamics of labour migration it is imperative to look at case studies of migrants' life histories and specific rural areas. Individual strategies were underpinned by a relative judgement of opportunities and risks, costs and benefits in rural and urban areas. The motivation to move to urban areas was deeply rooted in rural realities and prevailing opportunities in Mwinilunga District. In the 1930s officials were still 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'.¹⁷³ This appears less surprising if rural and urban areas are viewed as connected through the process of self-realisation. Viewing labour migration as part of the process of self-realisation might advance existing debates within Zambian historiography, which all too often resort to polarising dichotomies of rural versus urban, or development versus underdevelopment. By partaking in rural-urban networks, migrants reconfigured ideas

¹⁶⁷ See: Englund, 'The village in the city'; Andersson, 'Informal moves'.

¹⁶⁸ See: Andersson, 'Administrators' knowledge'; Geschiere and Gugler, 'The urban-rural connection'.

¹⁶⁹ Englund, 'The village in the city'; Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

¹⁷⁰ Bakewell, 'Keeping them in their place'.

¹⁷¹ Ferguson, *Expectations of modernity*.

¹⁷² Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the rural-urban connection', 105.

¹⁷³ (NAZ) NWP1/2/2 Loc.4897, A. F. C. Campbell, Mwinilunga District Tour Report, 23 August 1937.

of locality, success and personhood. In the end, 'the motive for migration was, perhaps (...) to seek alternative means of being local'.¹⁷⁴

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Book Reviews

The long shadow of the British Empire: The on going legacies of race and class in Zambia. By Juliette Bridgette Milner-Thornton (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) xi, 304 pp.

There has been almost no academic research on the coloured community in Zambia and this alone would make Milner-Thornton's account of the creation of coloured identity and the experience of the coloured community during the colonial period welcome. Milner-Thornton herself identifies only one previous work, Ibbo Mandaza's 1997 book *Race, colour and class in Southern Africa*, which considers Zambia alongside Zimbabwe and Malawi, and I can think of no other. Building on her doctoral research, she therefore sets out to document the experience of a community deeply connected with the African and European societies which created them, yet historically alienated from both.

There has been more work on coloured people in South Africa but Milner-Thornton argues that it is important to distinguish the community in Zambia from others in the region. She contrasts the long history of the coloured community in South Africa with the comparatively recent origins of the coloured community in Zambia as an ethnic category which is, "within the living memory of older members of the Zambian community." (p. 15) Moreover, there is a strong diasporic element in the Zambian coloured experience as many members of the Zambian coloured community have sought to return to Britain in recent decades, something Milner-Thornton links to the desire of Zambian coloured people to re-connect with the British fathers who abandoned them.

The treatment of the Zambian coloured community as distinct from other seemingly similar communities in southern Africa is well-justified. However, the book also contains a strong comparative element not only with Southern Rhodesia or South Africa, the usual counterparts to colonial-era Zambia, but also with Australia and West Africa.

Milner-Thornton has written what is in many ways a deeply personal book. She was born in Kitwe and her maternal great-grandfather was Doctor Sidney Spencer Broomfield, also known as 'Kachalola', an early settler in Northern Rhodesia who was perceived as a pioneer in colonial society (a town in Eastern Province is named after him). Her paternal grandfather was Joseph Milner, a Jewish Lithuanian who moved to Southern Rhodesia. Both men had relationships with African women and Milner-Thornton identifies herself strongly as a member of Zambia's coloured community, now spread across the world.

She has an intimate, personal connection with the subject at hand and this permeates the book. Her introduction is an account of a dinner party where she was challenged over how she identifies herself and the book ends with a moving account of her visit to the graves of her Jewish ancestors in the village of Silale, Lithuania. Many of the photographs contained in the book are pictures of her own family. This is not only a family history however, fascinating as that would be, but a way in which to examine and understand the production of ethnic identities in a historical setting. She defines her approach as autoethnographic, using the personal experiences of herself and her family to explore wider questions about ethnic identity and colonialism.

Although few in number, Eurafriicans occupied an uncertain place in the colonial order. This enables Milner-Thornton to explain how ethnic identity was constructed during the colonial period. As she explains, the Eurafriicans were a social, racial and political problem as they presented, "a particular classificatory problem," in a society based on presumed innate racial

and cultural difference. (p. 72) This comparatively small number of people occupied an inordinate amount of official time, a clear indication of the importance placed on maintaining the boundaries of the racial order. The Northern Rhodesian Government held seven enquiries into the social, economic and political status of coloured people between 1939 and 1956, none of which could agree on a definition of 'coloured'. This government also corresponded extensively with other colonial administrations on the issue, providing a neat entry point for the valuable comparative element in the book mentioned above.

Milner-Thornton takes her great-grandfather as a representative of the group of British sojourners and settlers in Northern Rhodesia who had children with African women – including Percy Sillitoe, later Director General of M15 – and largely later abandoned them and the children they fathered. Broomfield never again contacted his children after he moved from Northern Rhodesia and it was only when Milner-Thornton relocated to Brisbane with her husband in 1998 that she discovered her great-grandfather had died at the Royal Brisbane Hospital and was buried in the city. This abandonment was coupled with the stigma of illegitimacy as the colonial authorities did not recognise marriages between Europeans and Africans, while non-European mothers could not register the birth of a baby if the European father did not acknowledge the children. This illegitimacy is one of the painful legacies of British colonial rule in Zambia for Milner-Thornton. She herself felt sharply aware of it when requesting a copy of Broomfield's will in Australia, as she perceived that officials there did not recognise that a black woman could be his legitimate great-granddaughter. (pp. 69-70)

Milner-Thornton engages closely with Broomfield's autobiography – *Kachalola : or, The early life and adventures of Sidney Spencer Broomfield* – and colonial documents to illustrate ideas about sexuality, perceived appropriate gender relations and colonial categories. Her description of Broomfield's own life reveals important aspects of the early settler society, particularly its transience and the kind of Europeans who were attracted to the territory. For instance, Doctor Broomfield was not, it seems, actually a doctor as he appears to have held no medical qualifications. In a twist worthy of a Patricia Highsmith novel, Milner-Thornton's ancestor arrived in Southern Rhodesia as plain Sydney Spencer in 1892, when there also appears to have been a Doctor Broomfield working in the territory as an endocrinologist. This Doctor Broomfield subsequently disappears and Sydney Spencer assumes the name Broomfield at some stage after entering North-Western Rhodesia in 1896. (p. 40) Unfortunately, Milner-Thornton's diligent research has been unable to verify or disprove this story.

Milner-Thornton's research has been facilitated by her own lived experience. She discussed how Northern Rhodesian Eurafricans have generally preferred to marry other Eurafricans and have produced complex, interconnected ties of kinship within the community. This community places a great weight on understanding these family connections, partly, she explains, to avoid the inadvertent development of incestuous relationships (p. 100). Given her position within this community, and the importance placed on family, it is a shame that she does not make more use of oral history, as she does in an earlier work, her chapter in Mohamed Adhikari's 2009 edited volume *Burdened by Race: coloured identities in southern Africa*.

It is also a shame that this study largely confines itself to the colonial period, though Milner-Thornton is explicitly concerned with the legacies of British colonialism and its enduring impact on herself and her family. She notes that the coloured community has not faded away in Zambia even though it has dispersed across the world. Milner-Thornton stresses as well that coloured identity was not an imposed colonial category, a bureaucratic solution to a vexing problem in the racial order. Instead, "Colouredness... describes the community's historical cultural practices, which are an amalgamation of European and African cultural traditions," and captures this community's experience of marginalisation in the colonial period. (p. 237) Beyond stories from her own life, there is little systematic treatment of the coloured community in the post-

colonial period and how the segregation of this community was initially imposed from above but evolved into a self-imposed separation.

These, however, are comparatively minor criticisms. Milner-Thornton's work represents a welcome and important contribution to the sadly neglected area of the history of Zambia's minority groups. This effective intertwining of personal family history and wider imperial history sheds light on racial boundaries in colonial society. She amply demonstrates that the lingering presence of the British Empire in Zambia is present not only in governing institutions, the built environment and language, but also in the lived experience of the Zambian coloured community.

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ZAMBIA SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL

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