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‘IT MEANS AS IF WE ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE GOOD FREEDOM’: THWARTED  
EXPECTATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE LUAPULA PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA,  
1964-1966\*

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**ABSTRACT:** Based on a close reading of new archival material, this article makes a case for the adoption of an empirical, ‘sub-systemic’ approach to the study of nationalist and post-colonial politics in Zambia. By exploring the notion of popular ‘expectations of independence’ to a much greater degree than did previous studies, the paper contends that the extent of UNIP’s political hegemony in the immediate post-independence era has been grossly overrated – even in a traditional rural stronghold of the party and during a favourable economic cycle. In the second part of the paper, the diplomatic and ethnic manoeuvres of the ruler of the eastern Lunda kingdom of Kazembe are set against a background of increasing popular disillusionment with the performance of the independent government.

**KEY WORDS:** Central Africa, Zambia, Congo, ethnicity, nationalism, independence, post-colonial.

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## INTRODUCTION

Owing to the dearth of primary sources available for study and to shifting historiographical trends and fashions, present-day historians of south-central Africa have proved reluctant to engage with Zambia's nationalist and post-colonial trajectories.<sup>1</sup> This paper ought to be seen as a modest contribution to the rectification of this scholarly neglect.<sup>2</sup> As elsewhere in Africa, the gap left open by historians in the 1970s and 1980s was plugged by political scientists whose principal concern was the construction of 'macro-political theory relevant to politics in all places and all times by the application to empirical cases of such overarching notions as "modernization"'.<sup>3</sup> But the adoption of what Bratton calls the 'viewpoint of the centre' came at a cost, for it frequently provided the unwitting excuse for overlooking the real, lived experiences of nationalist militants and other low-level political actors. However sophisticated, nation-wide studies of major structural and political dynamics have taught us very little about popular appraisals of nationalism and the ultimate meaning of independence for the people who played a (more or less) active role in bringing this political transformation

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<sup>1</sup> Forty years after their compilation, R.I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1965), and D.C. Mulford, *Zambia: The Politics of Independence, 1957-1964* (Oxford, 1967) remain the most comprehensive analyses of Zambian nationalism. On the atrophied state of the historiography of post-colonial Africa as a whole, see S. Ellis, 'Writing histories of contemporary Africa', *Journal of African History*, 43 (2002), 1-26, esp. 8.

<sup>2</sup> For another recent step in the right direction, see M. Larmer, 'Zambia's mineworkers and political change, 1964-1991' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> M. Bratton, *The Local Politics of Rural Development: Peasant and Party-State in Zambia* (Hanover and London, 1980), 10.

into being.<sup>4</sup> With the notable exceptions of Bates and Bratton – by whose perspectives this paper is informed<sup>5</sup> – few social scientists have seen fit to emulate Epstein’s classic study of militancy in Luanshya,<sup>6</sup> and in-depth analyses of the local articulation of broad processes of political change have remained thin on the ground. Based mainly on the personal records of Alex Kaunda Shapi,<sup>7</sup> the Luapula province’s Resident Minister between 1964 and 1967, and the newly opened archives of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), Zambia’s ruling party between 1964 and 1991, this paper makes a case for the adoption of an empirical, ‘sub-systemic’ approach to the study of nationalist and post-colonial politics in Zambia.

Two specific contributions descend from this general premise. The case of the Luapula province calls into question the UNIP-centred narrative which has prevailed among students of Zambian politics since independence. The argument which is often made or alluded to in the specialist literature is that it was only the economic recession of the early 1970s that weakened the developmentalist project of the ‘people’s party’ and seriously threatened its hitherto secure political hegemony. Until then, UNIP had, so to speak, delivered.<sup>8</sup> This paper takes issue with this view by placing the notion of ‘expectations of independence’ firmly at

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<sup>4</sup> The most representative examples of the literature I have in mind are possibly W. Tordoff (ed.), *Politics in Zambia* (Manchester, 1974); C. Gertzel (ed.), *The Dynamics of the One-Party State in Zambia* (Manchester, 1984); and M.M. Burdette, *Zambia: Between Two Worlds* (Boulder, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Bratton, *Local Politics*. Chapter 10 of R.H. Bates, *Rural Responses to Industrialization: A Study of Village Zambia* (New Haven and London, 1976) includes a masterly, though less detailed and geographically more narrow, treatment of some of the same *problématiques* with which I am concerned here.

<sup>6</sup> A.L. Epstein, *Politics in an Urban African Community* (Manchester, 1958).

<sup>7</sup> Deposited at the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ), Lusaka, in 2003 and marked by the code HM 89.

<sup>8</sup> The most explicit formulations of the argument are to be found in Burdette, *Zambia*, 67-8, and J.M. Mwanakatwe, *End of Kaunda Era* (Lusaka, 1994), 48. But see also W. Tordoff and R. Moltano, ‘Introduction’, in Tordoff, *Politics in Zambia*, 14-8; C. Gertzel, C. Baylies and M. Szeftel, ‘Introduction: the making of the one-party state’, in Gertzel, *Dynamics*, 5. For a more realistic assessment of ‘growing peasant apathy to the party’ from the mid-1960s, see Bratton, *Local Politics*, 228-9.

the centre of the analysis.<sup>9</sup> In the Luapula province, where a high level of political mobilization from the early 1950s had pushed the latter to their limits, the perception of a failure on the part of UNIP to hand over the proverbial fruits of political freedom predated the fall of copper prices from 1970. What is really staggering, in fact, is the rapidity with which Luapulans grew disaffected with the party that had so successfully embodied their hopes for a better future between 1958, when it first appeared on the political scene as the Zambia African National Congress (ZANC), and 1964, the year of independence.

The UNIP government's shaky start in the Luapula province was seized upon by the seventeenth ruler of the eastern Lunda kingdom of Kazembe, Paul Kanyembo Lutaba, whose complex diplomatic and ethnic manoeuvres in the early post-independence era form the subject of the second part of this essay. In keeping with the general thrust of the paper, and drawing inspiration from Caplan's still unrivalled study of Lozi élites,<sup>10</sup> my reading of the available evidence underscores the importance of the local context and the limited value of neat generalizations concerning the relationships between 'native authorities' and the Zambian nationalist movement and government. The tension between eastern Lunda royals and UNIP was less the result of an automatic clash between 'traditional' and democratic institutions (as implied, for instance, by Tordoff and Molteno<sup>11</sup>) than the consequence of specific historical circumstances and, especially, the ability with which Paul Kanyembo's predecessors had taken advantage of the new opportunities provided by colonial rule.

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<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Miles Larmer for bringing home to me the momentousness of this interpretative category.

<sup>10</sup> G.L. Caplan, *The Elites of Barotseland, 1878-1969: A Political History of Zambia's Western Province* (London, 1970)

<sup>11</sup> Tordoff and Molteno, 'Introduction', 20-1.

## THWARTED EXPECTATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

Due mainly to the exceptional importance of the fishing industry in the economy of the area and to the widespread resentment generated by a series of ill-judged colonial attempts to regulate this most anarchic of economic activities, the Luapula province was characterised by a very early and intense involvement in the anti-colonial movement. Celebrated in numerous nationalist publications and berated in countless administrative reports,<sup>12</sup> the province's 'extreme political nationalism' between the early 1950s and the early 1960s has often been singled out as a unique example of rural mobilization in Northern Rhodesia (colonial Zambia).<sup>13</sup> Less well appreciated, however, is the fact that this high level of popular militancy went hand in hand with the elaboration of a fundamentally acquisitive notion of independence. This is probably less a proof of political immaturity than the unforeseen by-product of the wild (and largely unrecorded) promises made by local party organizers, whose job it was to sustain the enthusiasm of their followers during the long-drawn-out struggle and to equip them to put up with the personal and collective costs of political agitation.<sup>14</sup> Be this as it may, there is little doubt that most of the province's inhabitants were sincerely convinced that the end of British rule would coincide with the sudden disappearance of all of their local grievances and the beginning of a meteoric process of 'development'. Far from being a

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<sup>12</sup> Compare, e.g., the famous special issue of *The Voice of U.N.I.P., A Grim Peep into the North* (Lusaka, n.d. [but late 1961]), 15-20, with Kawambwa Tour Reports, 2, 4 and 7, 1960, NAZ, SEC2/887.

<sup>13</sup> M.C. Musambachime, 'Rural political protest: the 1953 disturbances in Mweru-Luapula', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 20 (1987), 437-53; Mulford, *Zambia*, 70-1; C. Baylies, 'Luapula province: economic decline and political alienation in a rural U.N.I.P. stronghold', in Gertzel, *Dynamics*, 169-73. The quotation is taken from Kawambwa Annual Report for 1960, encl. in District Commissioner (Kawambwa) to Provincial Commissioner (Luapula), Kawambwa, 21 Jan. 1961, NAZ, LP 2/2/81.

<sup>14</sup> Bratton, *Local Politics*, 206.

precondition for slow and painful economic growth, independence added up to a theory of immediate and tangible rewards.<sup>15</sup>

Signs of what was to come began to manifest themselves as early as 1962-63, when a semi-independent coalition government between UNIP and Harry Nkumbula's African National Congress (ANC) paved the way for the devolution of full sovereignty to an all-UNIP cabinet led by Prime Minister Kenneth Kaunda in January 1964.<sup>16</sup> Fiscal obligations and the fishing regulations were the first casualties of the Luapulans' impatience to reap the harvest of their political toil.<sup>17</sup> For all their hard-won skills in the 'art of manoeuvring between two opposite poles',<sup>18</sup> a number of chiefs failed to get to grips with the highly charged atmosphere of the time. In April 1963, Kanyembo, the leader of a subordinate native authority in the lower Luapula valley, was assaulted by some UNIP militants after questioning the legitimacy of their violent party card-checking exercise. 'Some said I was not even a chief because UNIP is in power there will be no chiefs here'. In light of these rumours, Kanyembo requested John Malama Sokoni, Kaunda's 'under secretary', to dispatch to the valley 'one Minister [...] or any top leader of the party to come and tell the people "what is independence" and what will follow after independence.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A 1963 leader in *People's Voice*, the UNIP newsletter for the Southern province, pointed out that the party had 'not promised [its] followers anything more than hard work' after independence. This is difficult to believe, not least because the same anonymous writer thought it wise to encourage 'our people [to] understand that Freedom does not mean that everybody will live in a big house and drive in a car.'

<sup>16</sup> Following the formal declaration of independence in Oct. 1964, Kaunda became the Republic's first executive President.

<sup>17</sup> Bates, *Rural Responses*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> I borrow this expression from K. Datta, 'The policy of Indirect Rule in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), 1924-1953' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Chief Kanyembo to J.M. Sokoni, Kanyembo's village, 19 Apr. 1963, United National Independence Party's Archives (UNIPA), Lusaka, UNIP 5/2/1/14.

The general disposition of the province in the run-up to independence is aptly illustrated by a lengthy petition submitted to a delegation of visiting UNIP dignitaries by the leaders of the Nalupembe constituency of the party. The principal ‘complaint’ brought to the attention of the government in this veritable blueprint for instant socio-economic improvement concerned the lack of opportunities for local employment. The need for ‘more investors to open up industries of different nature’ was stressed, but the best recipe for development was considered to be the provision of government ‘loans to everyone’. ‘More schools’, ‘dispensaries and clinics’, ‘community centres’ and ‘townships’ were also deemed necessary to ameliorate the ‘abominable’ standards of living in ‘this most backward area’.<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister Kaunda himself was not unaware of the burden of the province’s expectations, for during a visit to Kawambwa in March 1964 he felt impelled to remind his audience that ‘since we formed the Government we have only been able to do all our work in six weeks [...] that is why our people must be lenient.’<sup>21</sup>

But Kaunda’s pleas fell on deaf ears, for throughout 1964 and 1965 provincial demands continued to multiply. UNIP branch and constituency officials – to whom the party had always been reluctant to pay any form of allowance<sup>22</sup> – proved to be a particularly intractable group and their claims a constant thorn in the side of both provincial and national leaders. As shown by the following letter, unpaid party officials in the Luapula province were prepared to go at considerable lengths to gain admission to the patronage networks which were then taking shape around Alex Shapi, the newly appointed Resident Minister.

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<sup>20</sup> M.K. Machisemu and F. Kafwimbi, ‘Memorandum’, Chipili, 21 Feb. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/5/F1.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in B. Chola to UNIP constituency secretaries (Kawambwa-Mwense-Nchelenge region), Kawambwa, 10 Mar. 1964, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/13.

<sup>22</sup> J.M. Mwanakatwe to M.M. Chona, Lusaka, 28 May 1963, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/12; Bratton, *Local Politics*, 263-5.

You are now on the throne, the ruler that as whole Luapula province is now upon your head, its progress and development lies entirely in your hands. [...]. Dear Shapi, you have opened the way, I see that when I look forward everything is clear, my way to success is at hand as far as you don't forget me. [...]. This is my chance which I don't like to lose.<sup>23</sup>

Although the specific requests by which such protestations of loyalty were normally followed varied greatly, most branch and constituency officials appear to have set their sights on obtaining either government loans or gainful employment in the rapidly expanding Zambian civil service. Writing to S. Chisembele, MP, Sterling Lupiya, the then secretary of the Samfya-Lunga region of UNIP, bemoaned the deplorable situation of some constituency officials who were failing to 'maintain their families in feeding or clothing them'. He knew, of course, that loans were not usually granted 'without any security', but he thought an exception could be made for 'our prominent leaders who have lost their leaving [sic] due to the political struggle, and [...] can't have no where to get such a security'.<sup>24</sup>

The appeal to personal past militancy was not the only reason why the claims of local party officials proved hard to dismiss; cautious leaders were also alive to the potential political costs of thwarted ambition. In October 1964, for instance, Chilufya Linso, the one-time chairman of the Mwense constituency of UNIP, tried to form what he polemically called 'an Association of Loafers'. Drawing support from a number of branch leaders whose 'worry was unemployment', he was rumoured to be 'connected with some people in Katanga' and to

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<sup>23</sup> M.C. Mapulanga to A.K. Shapi, Samfya, 3 Aug. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F2.

<sup>24</sup> S. Lupiya to S. Chisembele, Samfya, 26 July 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3. See also A.C. Bendela to 'dear comrade', Fort Rosebery, 12 Dec. 1964, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/18; D.E. Mulenshi to K.D. Kaunda, Fort Rosebery, 16 Dec. 1964, NAZ, HM 89, uncatalogued; M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 24 May 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

be planning to disrupt the forthcoming independence celebrations.<sup>25</sup> Shapi sought to pacify Linso with the promise of future employment in the party. When this failed to materialize, however, Linso resumed his furious – if localized – anti-governmental campaign.<sup>26</sup> At about the same time, N.A. Chitomombo, of the Kapata branch, suggested that his own experience of marginalization (his application for a bursary to the party had been unsuccessful) was symptomatic of a more general ‘neglect’ for the ‘common man’ on UNIP’s part. Should the present trend continue unchecked – he warned – ‘blood revolution’ would become inevitable.<sup>27</sup>

While their brashness make Linso and Chitomombo’s stances atypical, the profound frustration which they reflected was shared by a good number of their fellow party workers and, increasingly, ordinary Luapulans. Although less vocal than constituency and branch officials, Luapulan full-time fishermen and peasants were similarly uncompromising in staking out their claims to a portion of the fruits of independence. Employment was undoubtedly the Luapulans’ principal concern, and its provision the ultimate test of the sincerity of the state’s commitment to the betterment of the lives of its new citizens. As early as 1963, O.O.M. Chongo, a ‘progressive’ fisherman in the relatively underdeveloped northern Mweru fisheries, had informed the national leadership of UNIP that ‘ignorant people’ had rejected his proposal to form marketing societies on the ground that ‘they should not take the trouble of carrying on with fisheries as they would be given employment by government

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<sup>25</sup> A.K. Shapi to [B. Chola], Fort Rosebery, 26 Sept. 1964; B. Chola to A.K. Shapi, Kawambwa, 6 Oct. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F2.

<sup>26</sup> B. Chola to UNIP constituency secretary (Mwense), n.p. [but Kawambwa], 21 Oct. 1964; M. Sikazwe to A.K. Shapi, Kawambwa, 14 Nov. 1964; A.K. Shapi to M. Sikazwe, Fort Rosebery, 25 Nov. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F2. Mention of Chilufya Linso’s earlier anti-colonial activities is made in S.N. Chipungu, ‘African leadership under Indirect Rule in colonial Zambia’, in *idem* (ed.), *Guardians in Their Time: Experiences of Zambians Under Colonial Rule, 1890-1964* (London and Basingstoke, 1992), 63, 66.

<sup>27</sup> A.C. Bendala to N.A. Chitomombo, Fort Rosebery, 6 Nov. 1964, HM 89/PP/1/F2.

immediately we achieve self government.’<sup>28</sup> So great were the people’s expectations in this latter regard that even the members of the newly constituted Kawambwa Rural Council – a group not otherwise known for its unselfish dedication to the cause of provincial development<sup>29</sup> – pointed out that

the existing un-employment and solution out of it remains and is a burden on shoulders of all people involved in the responsibilities which and must be given priority than anything else, if Zambia has to control the need and wishes of the majority [...].<sup>30</sup>

The initial enthusiasm with which Luapulans responded to the inception of the cooperative ‘movement’ – the milestone of rural development in the (not always coherent) thought of President Kaunda – was a direct consequence of this overarching yearning for increased local incomes. Not less than fifty farming cooperatives were established in the province in the early part of 1965. But its remoteness from the urban markets and exclusive reliance on the hazardous road across the Congolese pedicle meant that Luapula was particularly ill-suited for commercial agricultural production. More disturbingly still, these structural obstacles were compounded by an initial delay in the release of government loans and allowances. The ensuing ‘doubts about the government’s economic development programme’ did not surprise M.E. Mwanakaoma, a perceptive provincial cooperative and marketing officer, who suspected that most cooperative organizers ‘were under the impression

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<sup>28</sup> O.O.M. Chongo to M.M. Chona, Puta, 19 Sept. 1963, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/14.

<sup>29</sup> The ‘virtual rape of the treasury’ of the Council led to its temporary closure in Aug. 1966; Bates, *Rural Responses*, 203.

<sup>30</sup> B. Chola to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 3 Feb. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

that all they had to do was apply and the money would be distributed immediately.’<sup>31</sup> As late as May 1966, Chikalamo farming cooperative in Kasempa’s village had yet to receive

any information about [its] loan, if it is approved or not. [...]. It will be kindly enough to appreciate us as human beings. We have wasted too much energy on stumping. It means as if we are excluded from the good Freedom. Because our demands or hopes have been betrayed [...].<sup>32</sup>

By the time the Department of Cooperatives and the Credit Organization of Zambia began finally to disburse the expected funds, a good number of initial adherents had withdrawn from the movement. The bureaucratic constraints which continued to plague the operations of Luapulan farming cooperatives, leading to their wholesale liquidation from 1970, would soon vindicate the sceptics’ decision to revert to family-based (as opposed to communal) farming.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that the extension of producer cooperatives to the fishing industry was never seriously contemplated should not be taken to imply that commercial fishermen, an all-important socio-professional group in the Luapula valley and along the shores of lakes Mweru and Bangweulu, did not have their own set of expectations and pressing demands. However welcomed, the government’s continuing unwillingness to enforce colonial fishing regulations was viewed as no more than a palliative. Thus, while advocating such positive measures as

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<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the ‘development conference (co-operatives)’, Lusaka, 26 Feb. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/3/F1; M.E. Mwanakaoma to director of cooperatives, Fort Rosebery, 28 July 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

<sup>32</sup> D.K. Cibwe to A.K. Shapi, Kasempa’s village, 2 May 1966, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F4.

<sup>33</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Development Committee, Fort Rosebery, 29 June–1 July 1967, NAZ, HM 89/PP/3/F1. See also G. Mickels Kokwe, *Maize, Markets & Livelihoods: State Intervention and Agrarian Change in Luapula Province, Zambia, 1950-1995* (Helsinki, 1997), 16-20; J. Gould, ‘Local strategies and directed development: cooperatives between state and community in Luapula’, in K. Crehan and A. Von Oppen (eds.), *Planners and History: Negotiating “Development” in Rural Zambia* (Lusaka, 1994), 223-4; and Bates, *Rural Responses*, 136-45.

the edification of new ice plants and market buildings, Bangweulu fishermen, grossly overestimating the government's financial capabilities, lobbied for *individual* loans to purchase 'machine boats which could help them to go and catch fish in the middle of the lake without fear'.<sup>34</sup>

National policy-makers may have been tempted to ridicule the 'unreasonableness' of all these individual and collective claims upon public resources. Regional party officials knew better than that. Still relatively close to the grass roots, they repeatedly warned their superiors that much initial goodwill was being sunk in the gulf separating the magnitude of the province's expectations and the overall modesty of the socio-economic improvements being made under the Transitional Development Plan (TDP) of 1965-66.<sup>35</sup> While reports from the Mwense constituency of UNIP, the site of Linso's deeply divisive activities, described a 'weak' party, less and less attractive to people who lacked 'employment as it [was] the general complaint everywhere',<sup>36</sup> the 'unfortunate' inhabitants of the inhospitable swamps of lake Bangweulu had been 'completely ignored' by the TDP and were therefore finding it hard 'to distinguish this Govt. from Welensky's Govt. as people believe in those things they touch and see.'<sup>37</sup>

In this context of waning popular support for the party and its government, old foes of UNIP felt safe enough to lift their heads up again. Loseni Kasokota was the president of

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<sup>34</sup> S. Lupiya to A.M. Milner, Samfya, 21 Sept. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3; Minutes of the 'development conference (co-operatives)', 26 Feb. 1965.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., M. Mulikita, Progress Report on the Implementation of the TDP in the Luapula Province, encl. in M. Mulikita to D.C. Mulaisho, Fort Rosebery, 26 Aug. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

<sup>36</sup> D.E. Mulenshi, Mwense Tour Report, 6 Apr. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/4/F1.

<sup>37</sup> A.C. Bendela to Minister of State (Cabinet Office), n.p. [but Fort Rosebery], 9 Mar. 1965, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/18. The outspokenness of the secretary of the Fort Rosebery-Samfya-Lunga region of UNIP earned him an official rebuke. His half-hearted apology is to be found in A.C. Bendela to Minister of State (Cabinet Office), Fort Rosebery, 18 Mar. 1965, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/18.

Chipungu Local Rural Court and a well-known supporter of the ANC, Zambia's main opposition party. In June 1965, during an altercation with a Daniel Kabulubulu, he and his wife insulted

UNIP people in general. She even went on talking that, we are ever rich, and the Government knows it. And the very Government that you were fighting for has done nothing for you. You will be wearing long trousers full of patches everywhere. You will never enjoy the fruits of the Government except us. [...]. And your families will suffer continuously. This made people who were present become [sic] annoyed terribly.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs. Kasokota was more attuned to popular feelings than the last remark of the secretary of the Chiyenge region of UNIP suggests. A few months later, in fact, M.M. Lumande's neighbour, Bwalya Chola, the secretary of the Kawambwa-Mwense region of the party, was forced to admit that the delay in the realization of numerous TDP projects (including 'Mbereshi-Mwenda road and Kashikishi Ice Plant, Musonda Falls Electricity Scheme, release of money for Co-operatives etc.') was making the life of regional and constituency officials

very difficult [...] here people have turned against us that we are the only people who are trying to delay all these things [...]. All these examples to the people are worrying [sic] them, then all time we are working on delegations after delegations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 29 June 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

<sup>39</sup> B. Chola to H.D. Banda, J.M. Mwanakatwe and F. Chitambala, MPs, Kawambwa, 14 Aug. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/2/F1.

## MWATA KAZEMBE PAUL KANYEMBO LUTABA *VERSUS* UNIP

The loosening of the bond of trust between Luapulans and the independent government opened up a space which anti-UNIP forces promptly sought to fill. Unlike elsewhere in Zambia, the focal point of local opposition to the new regime was not so much the ANC, which was still struggling to re-establish a basic provincial organization after the massive defections to ZANC/UNIP in the late 1950s, as Paul Kanyembo Lutaba, Mwata Kazembe XVII (1961-83).

In order to understand the Mwata Kazembe's clash with UNIP, it is essential briefly to review the kingdom's experiences under colonial rule. The imposition of British control at the end of the nineteenth century was a blessing in disguise for eastern Lunda royals. Not only did it bring to an end the geopolitical decline of the kingdom and its long-standing vulnerability to aggressive external actors, but it also set the stage for a profound reorganization of the heartland of the polity, the lower Luapula valley. Having obliterated the threat of armed rebellion and violent interregal strife, colonial rule made it unnecessary to continue to exclude potential heirs to the throne from positions of territorial responsibility. Thus, during the reigns of Mwata Kazembe XI Muonga Kapakata (1904-19) and his successor, Chinyanta Kasasa (1919-35), control of most of the eastern Lunda *amayanga* (colonies) in the valley was wrested from hereditary title-holders and handed over to royal appointees belonging to the kings' patrilineage or their close kin. This restructuring of the kingdom along bureaucratic lines – or, to put it differently, the enhancement of the powers and prerogatives of the royal family to the detriment of the aristocracy – was institutionalised by the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances of 1929. Beside Mwata Kazembe Chinyanta Kasasa, the leader of the only superior native authority and court, the original Lunda Native Authority (LNA) of the lower Luapula valley comprised four other eastern Lunda chiefs. As many as three out of these four subordinate native authorities and courts

were in the hands of members of the royal family appointed during the previous thirty years.<sup>40</sup>

In virtue of its executive and legislative powers, the LNA became the instrument through which all further absolutist moves on the kings' part would be sanctioned and implemented.

While straining the relationships between eastern Lunda royals and aristocrats, the self-aggrandizing strategy pursued by the Mwata Kazembes in the first half of the twentieth century did not seriously affect the bulk of the kingdom's inhabitants, who appear to have done nothing to forestall it. More significant in determining their continuing allegiance to the royal family was the discreet populist posture adopted by the kings and other territorial leaders throughout most of the colonial era. As shown by Chipungu, Northern Rhodesian African authorities were generally alive to the risk of appearing too closely associated with the British overseers and their unpopular policies. The eastern Lunda chiefs were no exception. Far from being passive pawns in colonial hands and petty oppressors of their people, they were able to profit from the ambiguity of their intermediary position and kept waging a struggle 'for relative autonomy against the central government even when they appeared to serve colonial interests by performing such critical roles as revenue collection, maintenance of law and order through Native Courts, and the curbing of nationalism.'<sup>41</sup> Even though the sharp polarizations brought about by mass anti-colonialism from the early 1950s reduced their room for manoeuvre, eastern Lunda territorial leaders were careful not to antagonize directly the aspirations of their subjects. Unlike his subordinate chiefs – who parried colonial suspicions of double-dealing with the pretence of ultimate powerlessness *vis-à-vis* UNIP agitators<sup>42</sup> – Mwata Kazembe Paul Kanyembo, sensing the direction in which the wind was blowing in 1961-62, shed the cloak of cautiousness, clashed repeatedly with the

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<sup>40</sup> For a fuller treatment, see G. Macola, *The Kingdom of Kazembe: History and Politics in North-Eastern Zambia and Katanga to 1950* (Hamburg, 2002), 229-38.

<sup>41</sup> Chipungu, 'African leadership', 70.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, and Kawambwa Tour Report, 7, 1960.

colonial administration and emerged from the most militant phase in the province's history with a pro-UNIP reputation.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these promising beginnings, the harmony between eastern Lunda royals and UNIP was short-lived. To be sure, the king's support for the secession of Katanga (July 1960–January 1963) – which UNIP opposed wholeheartedly on both ideological and instrumental grounds (Moïse Tshombe, the Katangese President, was one of the main sponsors of the ANC) – must have caused some nationalist leaders to question the sincerity of Paul Kanyembo's loyalty to the Zambian cause.<sup>44</sup> Yet the principal bone of contention was undoubtedly the proposed abolition of the LNA and its incorporation in the Kawambwa Rural Council. As early as February 1963, T. Kafusha, the LNA's administrative secretary, thought it wise to remind Sokoni that a 'truly nationalistic' government would never 'overstep the traditions of Mwata Kazembe's Kingdom' and that 'Traditional Local Government [was] not a menace to good works of the Central Govt., if such a Government recognize[d] the established and inherited sectional interests of the people who comprise[d] a Nation.'<sup>45</sup> As the full implications of the reform of local government dawned on Paul Kanyembo, the tone of Kafusha's petitions became unmistakably harsher. Writing on 2 March 1963, he stressed that the eastern Lunda were prepared to 'resist any moves intended to undermine Mwata's Kingdom and Local Authority which [was] interwoven in it'. No 'change in the Laws governing the now known Native Authorities' – he concluded – should be sanctioned before consulting the eastern Lunda king.<sup>46</sup> Ten days later, the Mwata Kazembe himself made a passionate appeal to the kingdom's past glories and to 'the Portuguese Annals who had seen

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<sup>43</sup> D.M. Gordon, 'The cultural politics of a traditional ceremony: Mutomboko and the performance of history on the Luapula (Zambia)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46 (2004), 70.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; Kawambwa Annual Report for 1960.

<sup>45</sup> T. Kafusha to J.M. Sokoni, Mwansabombwe, 4 Feb. 1963, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/40.

<sup>46</sup> T. Kafusha to J.M. Sokoni, Mwansabombwe, 2 Mar. 1963, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/40.

my kingly standards and standing as from 1760-1800 onwards.’<sup>47</sup> It was all to no avail, however, as the Rural Council turned out to be a mainly elective body in which UNIP councillors outnumbered appointed chiefs and former LNA personnel by a ratio of nearly six to one.<sup>48</sup>

Bwalya Chola, the newly elected chairman, thought the Council to be a ‘realistic marriage between the Elected and the traditional rulers of our country as a body responsible for administration of this District.’<sup>49</sup> Paul Kanyembo – whom the new administrative set-up deprived of all direct executive and legislative powers – would have certainly begged to differ. The king’s chances to pursue the absolutist project initiated by his predecessors were further curtailed by the concomitant abrogation of the Lunda Native Treasury, the resources of which had done much to ensure the smooth functioning of royal patronage and redistributive networks during the previous three decades. Given that the Mwata Kazembe was also excluded from the House of Chiefs to the advantage of the Ushi leader Milambo – a state of affairs which Kafusha

rejected as stupid, idiotic, impolitic and untraditional. We have the biggest pile of traditions to observe in this country and Mwata is equal to none in as far as the historical and kingly backgrounds are concerned. How then are we going to accept that type of Tadpole Representation? Never, never, never<sup>50</sup> –

the announcement made by government at the beginning of 1965 to the effect that chiefs would soon be removed from presiding over local courts is likely to have been the spark that ignited an already explosive situation.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Mwata Kazembe Paul Kanyembo to K.D. Kaunda, Mwansabombwe, 13 Mar. 1963, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/40.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the First Meeting of the ‘Kawambwa District Council’, 5-7 Aug. 1964, encl. in B. Chola to director of elections, n.p. [but Kawambwa], 13 Aug. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F2.

<sup>49</sup> B. Chola to A.K. Shapi, Kawambwa, 7 Sept. 1964, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F2.

<sup>50</sup> Kafusha to Sokoni, 2 Mar. 1963.

In July of that same year, when Tshombe was still at the helm of the so-called *Gouvernement de Salut Public* (July 1964–October 1965), Paul Kanyembo paid a long visit to the Congolese bank of the Luapula river. The matter – and the fact that the Mwata ‘was again talking of the “Lunda Empire”’ – was immediately brought to the attention of President Kaunda by his Luapulan Resident Minister.<sup>52</sup> Details of the king’s itinerary and activities in Katanga began to emerge in August. According to Lumande’s informers, Paul Kanyembo had initially stopped in Chibondo swamp island, where he had told his audience (which had included a minister in the Provincial Government of Northern Katanga) that

he [had been] paving way for his final action (unknown action). He [had] confirmed [...] that he [had] no confidence in the Government of Zambia, except Congolese one, from where he came. He [had] continued expressing that the Government of younger people was taking away his Chieftainship. For that reason, he [had urged] the Chiefs there to support him.

The king was also said to have requested his Katangese allies to provide him with both weapons and ‘magic powers that can stop guns or bullets from getting into the flesh of humans.’<sup>53</sup> In ‘Mulenga’, to which he had proceeded after his stopover in Chibondo, the Mwata had met at least three important chiefs of the south-western shores of lake Mweru and advised them to be ‘very lenient’ when ‘Nkumbula people’ crossed the border into Zambia. Paul Kanyembo had then reiterated his ‘confidence in this Congo Government, which [was

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<sup>51</sup> Tordoff and Molteno, ‘Introduction’, 21; Caplan, *Elites of Barotseland*, 211.

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of the Second Meeting between President Kaunda and Resident Ministers, Lusaka, 7 July 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/3/F1.

<sup>53</sup> M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 11 Aug. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

his] state' and praised the 'Lenshina followers for their action against the state [in Zambia's Northern Province].'<sup>54</sup>

His trip to Katanga – and the 'uncountable respect' with which he was greeted – must have done much to bolster the king's confidence in his own means. Early in August, the then Chipepa, a court title-holder in Mwansabombwe, the capital of the kingdom, was heard boasting that the 'country of Zambia [was] very small' and that, had he wanted to, the Mwata Kazembe could have 'destroy[ed] it just in a day.'<sup>55</sup> During a subsequent meeting of eastern Lunda chiefs and headmen of the eastern bank of the Luapula, Paul Kanyembo made clear his determination 'to fight against our Government for the reason that Government [did] not give respect to Luunda chiefs. "Our power as chiefs has been reduced [sic] by UNIP Government", said chief Kazembe and his friends'. The report also gave the location of a series of hideouts for the expected Katangese guns. The 'situation' – concluded a very concerned regional publicity and youth secretary of UNIP – was 'very bad indeed. We cannot tolerate Katanga people to come and influence our people.'<sup>56</sup> Late in September, the eastern Lunda king entrusted headman Nkomba with the task of arranging a new meeting with Congolese chiefs and officials, and gave him £1 to that effect. The same Nkomba was quoted as having

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<sup>54</sup> M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 21 Aug. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3. On the prophetess Alice Lenshina and the localized rebellion sparked by her predication in 1964, see A.D. Roberts, 'The Lumpa church of Alice Lenshina', in R.I. Rotberg and A.A. Mazrui (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (New York, 1970), 513-68.

<sup>55</sup> M.M. Lumande to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 8 Aug. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

<sup>56</sup> M. Lufoma to political assistants (Luapula province), Kawambwa, 24 Sept. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/2/F1

spoke[n] some words of rebelling against Government of Zambia. He said 'I belong to the Lunda Empire, but not to this stupid Government which does not please us, as far as we have suitable weapons which we have hidden underneath the sand, we shall destroy it.'<sup>57</sup>

Tshombe's final fall from power represented an obvious setback for the Mwata Kazembe and seems to have done much to bring his seditious campaign to an abrupt end.<sup>58</sup> While it is difficult to ascertain whether Paul Kanyembo's activities were as pernicious to the survival of the young Zambian republic as Luapulan UNIP stalwarts were clearly made to believe, it is important to note that the eastern Lunda king sought repeatedly to fuse his own personal grudges with the mounting popular discontent with the performance of the independent government. During his Congolese visit, he explicitly accused the Zambian cabinet of 'not paying attention to the people's demands and their lives.'<sup>59</sup> Kaunda's – he charged on another occasion – was the 'Government of liers [sic]. Promises have not been fulfilled at all. People were promised a lot of things, which won't happen at all.'<sup>60</sup> Party officials knew that these utterances were meant to 'gain confidence from the people' and admitted that the king's popularity was growing by the day.<sup>61</sup> Paul Kanyembo's sustained appeal to past ethnic greatness and Lunda unity provided the ostensible ideological rationale for his Katangese policy. But it must also be placed in the context of his attempt to win back the undivided loyalty of his subjects. Far from being an anachronistic spasm, then, the popularisation of the image of the 'Lunda Empire' was meant to offer Luapulans the vision of an alternative political community – a community whose mythical contours were more an asset than a

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<sup>57</sup> [M.M. Lumande] to A.K. Shapi, Nchelenge, 1 Nov. 1965, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F3.

<sup>58</sup> Or so at least is suggested by the lack of further documentary evidence.

<sup>59</sup> Lumande to Shapi, 11 Aug. 1965.

<sup>60</sup> Lumande to Shapi, 21 Aug. 1965.

<sup>61</sup> Lumande to Shapi, 11 Aug. 1965.

liability, for they stood in sharp contrast with the profoundly frustrating reality of post-independence Zambia.

Although the Mwata Kazembe must have been aware of the favourable treatment accorded to Katangese ‘traditional’ leaders during the secession and the *Gouvernement de Salut Public*,<sup>62</sup> he is unlikely seriously to have pinned his faith on the possibility of engineering a political union between the Luapula valley and the Congo. The less far-fetched aim of his foolhardy foreign policy was probably to impress upon the UNIP government the need for a more tactful approach in its dealings with the eastern Lunda representatives. By and large, the king’s strategy was successful, as demonstrated by his timely admission to the House of Chiefs at the beginning of 1966. But the most lasting legacy of his manoeuvres was undoubtedly the intensification of ethnic feelings in the valley. Paul Kanyembo’s centrality to this revamped Lunda mystique secured him a safe niche in post-colonial Zambia and ushered in a phase in which cultural – as opposed to administrative – manipulation would become the hallmark of the eastern Lunda kings’ policy.<sup>63</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Mwata Kazembe’s enduring ascendancy in the political life of the province, of course, was also a function of UNIP’s continuing inability to match the Luapulans’ expectations for a better tomorrow. As UNIP failed to deliver its ‘promises to freedom fighters’ and faced the charge that ‘the slogan that “it pays to be UNIP” [was] the opposite of what [was]

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<sup>62</sup> E. Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge [Mass.] and London, 1975), 202-5, and I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo: de l’héritage ancien à la république démocratique* (Paris and Brussel, 1998), 603-4.

<sup>63</sup> My conclusions here support those of Gordon, ‘Cultural politics of a traditional ceremony’, 71-3.

happening',<sup>64</sup> more and more Luapulan party workers withdrew into relative political inertia. A few of them ignored the ethnic exclusivism of the United Party and joined Berrings Lombe and Nalumino Mundia's newly formed organisation.<sup>65</sup> The launch of the First National Development Plan in 1966 briefly revived provincial hopes. But despite the undeniable infrastructural improvements which it envisioned, Luapulans would soon discover that the province had been allocated 'only 4 per cent of the total expenditure' and that 'in terms of proposed per capita expenditure, Luapula and Western provinces ranked as the lowest with K66 and K65 respectively for the entire plan period.'<sup>66</sup>

Given all of this, it is hardly surprising that the local government elections of August 1966 took place in a climate of general apathy.<sup>67</sup> So marked, in fact, was the decline in the number of voters that the expediency was openly discussed by government of 'taking action against those people who did not register'.<sup>68</sup> Plainly, the Luapulans' disaffection with the post-independence settlement was becoming increasingly difficult to handle within a democratic framework. Over the next few years, calls for a more authoritarian political dispensation became more frequent and raucous both in the Luapula province and the country as a whole. When seen in the light of the long history of popular discontent which predated its inception in 1973, the one-party state was less a response to increased factional competition for fast-shrinking public resources (the standard explanation of political science) than the

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the National Council of UNIP, Lusaka, 28-31 Oct. 1966, NAZ, HM 89, uncatalogued.

<sup>65</sup> M.M. Lumande to provincial information officer, Kawambwa, 22 Aug. 1966, NAZ, HM 89/PP/1/F4.

<sup>66</sup> Baylies, 'Luapula province', 179.

<sup>67</sup> M. Lufoma to UNIP constituency and branch secretaries (Kawambwa-Mwense region), Kawambwa, 28 Apr. 1966, UNIPA, UNIP 5/2/1/18.

<sup>68</sup> 'Representation by Luapula province district secretaries to His Excellency the President on visit to Luapula province, 9th to 10th Sept. 1966', NAZ, HM 89/PP/5/F1.

means to ensure the survival of a besieged political elite, whose erstwhile credibility had all but melted away in the heat of unfulfilled expectations.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> If the interpretation given in this paper is correct, then the high turn-out (91 per cent) and rock solid majority for UNIP in the 1968 general elections, when the ANC only managed to contest two out of the ten available Luapulan seats, were not so much indications of a ‘sustained loyalty of the people of the province to the President and the party’ (Baylies, ‘Luapula province’, 179), as proofs of the endurance of the conviction in the possibility of transforming a deeply unsatisfactory state of affairs through electoral participation. By 1973, when a mere 54 per cent of Luapulans went to the poll in the first one-party election, even this liminal belief had evaporated.