

Decentralized Despots or Contingent Chiefs: Comparing Colonial Chiefs in Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo

Abstract This paper explores the make-up of colonial power in the rural hinterlands of the central African copperbelt. The area under study is the Mweru-Luapula Valley, divided by Lake Mweru and the Luapula River, which form the border between present-day Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo. We consider how colonial doctrine -- Indirect rule or *dominer pour servir* -- influenced the shape of colonial chieftaincies. The paper concludes that policy from above mattered less than the nature of precolonial polities, the process of conquest, and the economic importance of the region to the broader mining economy. In Mweru-Luapula, differences in these historical dynamics on either side of the Luapula River led to distinct types of colonial chiefs. On the Northern Rhodesian side of the river, influential chiefs had some legitimacy in their communities; on the Congolese side, the authority of chiefs rested more on the colonial state than on local legitimacy. In both cases, despite the best efforts of the colonial administrators, chiefs had a tenuous authority that never amounted to a "decentralized despotism".

From the boardrooms of the European capitals, where in the 1880s European diplomats and rulers shared what King Leopold II termed the "*magnifique gâteau africain*", the Mweru-Luapula Valley must have seemed a tiny morsel.¹ To be sure, avid followers of the missionaries and explorers like David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley probably knew the names of Lake Mweru and the Luapula River. After all, in 1873 Livingstone had died near the Luapula, which he believed to be the source of the Nile (in fact, Stanley's 1874-7 cross-continental expedition proved the Luapula to be the southernmost source of the Congo river). It was also home to the "King Kazembe", described by occasional Portuguese expeditions into the interior. Yet it was hardly a focus of the negotiations between the European diplomat-

¹ The quote is from Jean Stengers, "Leopold II and the Association Internationale du Congo," in *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Conference, 1884-5 and the Onset of Partition*, F. Föster, W.J. Mommsen and R. Robinson, eds. (London: German Historical Institute, 1988): 229-246.

entrepreneurs at the series of conferences responsible for the division of Africa. At the Berlin conference of 1884-5, usually cited as the commencement of European colonialism in Africa, the delegates did not decide on any precise boundaries to their spheres of influence and had little actual presence in Africa. Although King Leopold's International Association of the Congo had secured the Congo-Zambezi watershed in 1885, which included the mineral-rich Katanga, more precise boundaries would only be established in the Anglo-Belgian agreement of 1894. Even then, only several years later when the local administrations had "pacified" the local rulers and surveyed the land did the colonists gain an idea of their proclaimed possessions.

To the people of the valley, conquest by foreign powers presented no remarkable historical rupture. Yet from the perspective of the *longue durée* the division of the valley between the conquistador-like regimes of the British South African Company (BSAC) and King Leopold's Congo Free State initiated an era of tremendous change. European colonialism linked the valley to new markets and political forces that altered the structure of power in the villages. Economic, ecological and demographic change would reach down to the lives of all of Mweru-Luapula's peoples. One of the most fundamental political changes at the level of the village was the creation of colonial chieftaincies.

The chiefs were the most important political organs of the colonial states; they were the contact points between the colonial regimes and their subject peoples. A study of chiefs provides insight into the colonial impact on the make-up of village-level political authority. The "customary" associations that surrounded colonial chieftaincies allowed the first opportunity for the creation of a rural associational sphere which interacted with the embryonic bureaucratic state. In one sense, chiefs became "collaborators" condemned by both the nationalist movements and post-

independence historiography as colonial puppets, as “compradors”, or in a more recent account as “decentralized despots.”²

Yet, chiefs and chiefly networks were also more than simply part of the colonial state apparatus. Zambian historian Samuel Chipungu has pointed to the independent “Boma” class that surrounded Native Treasuries in colonial Zambia.³ Henry Meebelo argues that in the case of the plateau Bemba, “chiefs strove not only for political aggrandizement but also to give more significant attention to the aspirations of their subjects.”⁴ Although the implications of chiefly autonomy may differ according to the historian’s choice of emphasis and political persuasion, that chiefs and chiefly networks could organize followings independent of the colonial

² For “decentralized despotism” see Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). For the older literature on colonial chieftaincy see Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime, *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status Under Colonial Rule and Independence* (New York: Africana Press, 1970). Edouard Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). Edward Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration: The Kingdoms of Western Uganda, 1890-1907* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). Steven Feierman *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Rene Lemarchand, “Monarchical Responses to Social Change: A Spectrum of Strategies” in *African Kingdoms in Perspective: Political Change and Modernization in Monarchical Settings*, edited by Lemarchand (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1977). Robert Robinson “Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: A Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration.” in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, edited by Edward R. Owen and Robert B. Sutcliffe (London, Longman, 1972). Robert Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

³ Samuel Chipungu, “Accumulation from within: the Boma class and the Native Treasury in colonial Zambia” in Samuel N. Chipungu, ed., *Guardians in their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial Rule, 1860-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 74-96.

⁴ Henry Meebelo, *Reactions to Colonialism: A Prelude to the Politics of Independence in Northern Zambia, 1893-1939*, 178, 186-284.

state is evident. In this sense, colonial collaborating structures held the potential to form first civic organs, where rural people could negotiate the relationship of their communities to the expanding urban economies.

A comparative study of the creation of colonial chieftaincies by the Belgian and British administrations from the years of conquest in the 1890s to the beginning of decolonization in the 1950s points to the historical contingencies behind state formation and the rise of modern rural associational life. Three entwined factors led to the rise of distinct rural administrations with differing roles for collaborating agents. Firstly, and least important, was official colonial doctrine: Indirect Rule in the British case or *dominer pour servir* for the Belgians. A second factor was the centrality of the area for expatriate capitalist exploitation and the ties between capital and the colonial state. Frequently the most important factor was historical contingency or local agency, which was related to the nature of conquest, the extent to which pre-colonial polities survived into the colonial period, and thereby ability of these pre-colonial political organs to mobilize new followings.

Local agency was the most important factor in Mweru-Luapula. The vicissitudes of conquest and drawing of geographic borders left certain areas with more powerful pre-colonial structures which could give shape to local colonial institutions. On the Congolese side of the river, the assassination of the Nyamwezi leader of the “Yeke” state, Msiri, and the rupture of any ties with his local vassals next to the Luapula left the Belgians without a strong leader to consolidate different lineage elders and Owners of the Land. On the other side of the river, the Eastern Lunda leader, Mwata Kazembe X, succeeded in negotiating a surrender to British colonial agents. In later years, his successor would be able to reconstitute a network of subordinate chiefs.

The nature of capitalist exploitation and relative autonomy of the colonial state from capitalist interests was also a significant factor in Mweru-Luapula. In the Katangan province of the Belgian Congo, expatriate capitalists and colonial administrators collaborated to ensure the smooth running of the colonial economy. This meant the extraction of copper at the lowest possible cost; Mweru-Luapula was, in turn, destined to supply cheap food, especially fish, to urban workers. The colonial administration played a heavy-hand in the running of daily affairs. In Northern Rhodesia the colonial state was more independent of capitalist interests and, in any event, Mweru-Luapula was more marginal to these interests; during most of the colonial period, it was an administrative backwater.

"Pacification"

British and Belgian conqueror-administrators, together with several missionaries and explorers, arrived in the midst of a complex landscape of changing alliances and local conflict. Msiri and Mwata Kazembe competed for the tribute of local lords on the Luapula. They struggled to secure markets for their produce and their slaves. With the European abolition of the slave trade, fewer Swahili traders made the journey from Lake Tanganyika. Those who did attempted to circumvent both Msiri and Kazembe by developing their own networks of clients along Lake Mweru and the Luapula River.

The first European conquerors and administrators had dual aims. First, they sought to "pacify" the local rulers and traders, either through treaties or force. The more powerful a local leader, the greater the need for force; Msiri, Kazembe and the Swahili traders all proved to be stubborn foes of both the British and Belgians in Mweru-Luapula and required conquest by force of arms before submission. Second, colonial administrators wanted to prevent incursions by the other powers into their

proclaimed territory. This was especially important during the first ten years of the administration, when the border was ill defined and the land unsurveyed.

In the 1890s, heavily-armed European conquerors, with the aid of local African armies, subdued or put to flight local leaders. Msiri, the most powerful Katangan leader in the late nineteenth century, was the first to fall. In the midst of a widespread revolt by subordinate lords and a war with the Swahili trader, Simba, on Kilwa Island, Msiri faced the pacification expeditions of the Congo Free State. In 1891 Msiri tried to play-off Belgian and British forces by keeping British missionaries in his court and negotiating different treaties with the Congo Free State on the one hand and Alfred Sharpe of the BSAC on the other. On the 15th of December, Captain Stairs, an English mercenary in charge of an armed Belgian force, arrived at Msiri's capital to raise the Congo Free State's flag. Msiri, desperate for war materials, conceded on the condition that he was given a supply of gunpowder. Five days later, during the to and fro of negotiations, one of Stairs' officers, Captain Bodson, shot and killed Msiri. Although he was in turn shot by the Msiri's soldiers, Bodson allegedly managed to decapitate Msiri, take his head back to Stairs and shout "I have killed a tiger! *Vive le roi!*"⁵ A massacre, typical of the notorious Congo Free State, ensued:

⁵ This is according to the missionary Dan Crawford who spent over a year at Msiri's court and witnessed his last days. Edited versions of Crawford's diaries are in G.E. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 200. For a slightly varied account of Msiri's assassination see A. Verbeken *Msiri*, 227-251. Another helpful source is the published account of the Stairs' expedition's doctor: James A Moloney, *With Captain Stairs to Katanga* (London: S. Low, Marston and Co., 1893), 171-182. Also see Henri Delvaux, *L'Occupation du Katanga, 1891-1900*, Supplement to *l'Essor du Congo*, August, 1950, 38-40.

The population completely dispersed. No one dared walk openly abroad. The paths became lined with corpses, some of whom had died of starvation and some of the universal mistrust which keeps spears on the quiver.⁶

Captain Stairs, nicknamed *Bwana Mzinga* after his cannons, built a fort on the site of Msiri's stockade. Over the next two months he lost most of his men to dysentery and revenge attacks. In February 1892, he left for Zanzibar, allegedly with Msiri's head in a kerosene tin, but died en route. The missionary Dan Crawford remained to create a community of converts out of Msiri's former subjects. For this, the people of Luapula named him *Konga Vantu*, or Gatherer of the People.⁷

On the other side of Luapula, Mwata Kazembe X held back the agents of the BSAC for a number of years. In 1892 Kazembe had greeted and paid tribute to the BSAC representative, Alfred Sharpe. Over the next few years he had contacts with Europeans, including Dan Crawford who visited Kazembe's capital and a rubber trader who Kazembe had permitted to build a house nearby. However, after the BSAC administrator Dr. Blair Watson established a post on the Kalungwishi River, near Lake Mweru, Mwata Kazembe became more antagonistic. In 1897 he refused to accept European rule and did not allow a British flag to be raised in his Kingdom. He successfully repulsed an army of local and Swahili soldiers led by Watson. Two years later, in 1899, Alfred Sharpe, then the Governor of Nyasaland, returned with a company of Sikhs and Nyasaland armed forces. The colonial forces killed many and burned the Lunda capital to the ground. Mwata Kazembe escaped with his most

⁶ Crawford in Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 201.

⁷ Stairs' nickname is recorded in Katanti Mwitwa pa Kakala, "Pweto et Lukonzolwa: Premiers Capitales du Katanga", UNILU, 1971-2. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 244. Early converts were also "given" to Crawford by local lords as "presents." In effect, Crawford accepted slaves from local rulers to form the basis of his Christian community. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 244.

important notables by crossing the Luapula. A few weeks later, a missionary, Mrs. Anderson, escorted Kazembe back via Mambilima, where Henry J. Pomoroy had established the Johnston Falls mission in 1898. Kazembe agreed to BSAC suzerainty. He rebuilt his capital at Mwansabombwe and the British gave him a fireman's hat as recognition of his chieftaincy. This marked the end of the 150 year-old Lunda Kingdom in the Luapula Valley.⁸

Swahili traders resisted both administrations for a number of years, and although they abandoned Mweru-Luapula, were never completely defeated. An indication of their strength in Mweru-Luapula was Simba's fortifications on Kilwa Island, which the Swahili trader-lord governed ever since he aided Nkuba in the war against Msiri in the 1880s. Watson visited the island in 1895, shortly after Simba had died in a shooting accident, allegedly caused by the magical intervention of either Dan Crawford or Watson himself. Watson found a well-protected fort with many more guns than men. Simba's forces had managed to repulse five Belgian attacks, but were forced to negotiate with the British who had blocked their trade routes to Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Watson agreed to open up the trade routes and to provide protection against the Belgian forces as long as Simba's men did not trade in slaves and recognized British suzerainty. He told Simba's men that they could raise the British flag as soon as they removed the thirty-odd skulls of Belgian Askari's that decorated

⁸ There are a variety of stories about Mwata Kazembe's battles with the British. The colonial documentation denies defeat in 1897, yet this is contradicted by both oral testimony and Dan Crawford's diary. The best overall account is in Mwata Kazembe XIV, *Ifikolwe Fyandi*, 109-111. Also see Kawambwa District Notebook, 237-238, National Archives of Zambia (henceforth NAZ), KSG 3/1. The BSAC administrator, H.T. Harrington has a slightly different version, see H. T. Harrington, "The Taming of Northern Rhodesia", *Northern Rhodesian Journal* 3, 2 (1954):3-20, p. 12. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, pp. 397-398. Cunnison, *The Luapula Peoples*, 155-6.

the fort.⁹ Although Swahili traders still prospered on the Bemba plateau and in the Tanganyika region, by the turn of the century British and Belgian forces had either subdued or banished them from Mweru-Luapula.

The Belgians and the British also had to worry about each other. They competed to claim ground and feared the ambitions of their counterparts on the other side of the river. In the 1890s the BSAC and Leopold's Compagnie du Katanga had sent competing expeditions to "sign treaties" in the mineral-rich Katanga area. After the fall of Msiri to Stairs, Leopold's CFS gained the upper hand, and his authority over Katanga was formalized in the Anglo-Belgian treaty of 1894. Yet much confusion and conflict stemmed from the border agreement. The negotiated border between the CFS and Northern Rhodesia was a line extending from the "Cape Akalunga" on Lake Tanganyika to the right bank of the Luvua where it leaves the north of Lake Mweru. The border would then follow south through Lake Mweru, leaving Kilwa island to the British, south along the Luapula until Lake Bangweulu, and then along the line of longitude south until the watershed of the Congo and Zambezi that ran west towards Angola. If the boundary was complicated in the treaty, on the ground it was near impossible to establish. The Luapula often spread out into miles of marshlands with large islands where the border was impossible to determine. The line of longitude that supposedly defined the eastern border of the Congo pedicle intersected the Luapula at several points, creating a contested area (this problem was solved several years later by moving the boundary further west). Finally, as far as Mweru-Luapula was concerned,

⁹ Report by Dr. Blair Watson, 15 May 1895, NAZ, KSG 3/1. Reports of encounters with Simba are also reported in Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, pp. 342, 361, 403-4. The accidental death of Simba due to Crawford's magical interference is recorded in Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 343-4. Previous Belgian expeditions against Simba in Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 297, 326, 338. Oral history recorded by Musambachime in UNZA Special Collections, Musambachime, Interview with Muhammed Kabembe Tindwe, Kaseka's Village, 9 May 1975.

the most serious problem was the border line between "Cape Akalunga" on Lake Tanganyika and the northern point on Lake Mweru where the Luvua flowed towards the Congo River. "Cape Akalunga", a point recorded in Stanley's highly fictionalized diaries, in fact did not exist.¹⁰

Borders would have to be negotiated by colonial officials stationed in the area. By the 1900s the conquerors had set up several bases, which would become the initial administrative headquarters. The first Belgian post, called Lofoi, was established near Msiri's capital, Bunkeya, in 1891. A few years later three Congo Free State officers, Descamps, Maréchal and Froment, used Pweto on the northern tip of Lake Mweru as a base to do battle with the Swahili who had a trading depot in this strategic town, especially important because of its proximity to Lake Tanganyika.¹¹ In 1902 Comité Spécial du Katanga (CSK) officials occupied Pweto and it became the first district headquarters. Around 1900 a Belgian officer established another fort on the Luapula a few miles south from what would become the town of Kasenga.¹² In the same year a

¹⁰ After a number of border conflicts, an Anglo-Belgian border commission established a more viable boundary in 1913. The commission of 1911-1913 established a new point on Lake Tanganyika ceding territory to Northern Rhodesia in exchange for allowing a Belgian port on Lake Mweru on the east bank of the Luvua, which would become the town of Pweto. Commission Delimitation 1911-13, Archives Africaines (henceforth AA), Affaires Étrangères/I (henceforth AE/I) 272/334. Mission de delimitation Moëro-Tanganika, 1911-13, Cartographie (henceforth CART) 2071/343-351. Further border conflict between Katanga and Northern Rhodesia led to a second commission in 1921-5. Commission Delimitation Katanga Rhodesie 1921-5, AE/II 2962/852. For the Northern Rhodesian perspective see documents in Public Record Office (henceforth PRO), Colonial Office (Henceforth CO) 795/136/4501611.

¹¹ Delcaux, *L'Occupation du Katanga*, 45-6, 58-9.

¹² Lukonzolwa, 50 kilometers from Pweto, formed a second Belgian base between 1902 and 1909. Katanti Mwitwa pa Kakala, "Pweto et Lukonzolwa: premiers capitales du Katanga", UNILU, 1971-2.

Frenchman acting for the CFS, Leveque, established an administrative post at Lukonzolwa on the south-west shore of Lake Mweru.¹³ On the other side of the Lake Mweru, the BSAC established an early base at Chieng. In 1895 Dr. Blair Watson moved the base further south to Kalungwishi. The Company established a smaller base at the old Fort Rosebery, near Mambilima, at the southern end of the valley. In 1908 the British officials relocated to Kawambwa on the plateau overlooking the valley, which would become the administrative headquarters of Luapula for most of the colonial period.¹⁴

Missionaries also established a noticeable presence on both sides of the border. In 1886 Frederick Stanley Arnot of the Plymouth Brethren arrived at Msiri's capital, Bunkeya. Charles Albert Swan and William Henry Faulknor in 1888 and Dan Crawford in 1890 replaced him. After the death of Msiri, Dan Crawford relocated from Lofoi to Luanza on the western shores of Lake Mweru where he built a mission center in 1894. His influence over Mweru-Luapula spread rapidly. After shooting a hippo on the lower Luapula, Mulundu invited Crawford to open another mission, and in 1897 Crawford sent Henry J. Pomoroy to establish the Johnston Falls mission next to Mulundu's village. After a precarious first few years due to threats from Kazembe, Dugald Campbell took over the mission in 1901, and Willie Lammond after him in 1905. From his mission, Lammond would influence the political and religious affairs of the valley over the next 50 years. In 1900 the London Missionary Society established the Mbereshi mission on a hill overlooking the valley, near Mwata Kazembe's rebuilt capital, Mwansabombe. The Mbereshi mission school would

¹³ Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 501.

¹⁴ Willie Lammond, "The Luapula Valley", in *Northern Rhodesian Journal* 2, 5 (1955): 50-55, pp. 52-3. Also see Kawambwa District Notebooks, NAZ, KSG 3/1, Vol. 3.

become an important school for girls from across the region. In the Congo between 1890 and 1910 Catholics opened missions at Pweto (the White Fathers) and at Kasenga (Benedictines).¹⁵

Thus several rather dispersed European outposts were set up. They held considerable influence over valley affairs, especially following the defeat of the more powerful African rulers and traders. Nevertheless, they were few and far between and at first struggled to intervene in everyday affairs, except through the most direct and authoritarian measures. The BSAC began collecting hut tax around 1901. Harrington, the BSAC official, reported little outright resistance, although most men fled into the bush upon his arrival rather than pay the annual 3s tax. He also set up a court system run by newly-recognized "chiefs".¹⁶

Both Belgian and British administrations were concerned with incursions into the other's territory. Harrington lodged frequent complaints against the CFS agents.¹⁷ And CFS officials told their agents to be especially vigilant of missionaries like Dan

¹⁵ For Northern Rhodesian missions see Robert I Rotberg, *Christian Missions and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Robert I. Rotberg, "Plymouth Brethren and the occupation of Katanga, 1886-1907," *Journal of African History* 2, 1964: 285-297. Arnot, *Garanganze*, 172-243. Mambilima Mission manuscript, Willie Lammond "Outline History of Johnston Falls Mission mostly from memory". Lammond, "The Luapula Valley", p. 52. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 325-332. Dan Crawford, *Thinking Black*, 467-8. Oral evidence indicates Kazembe near to Mambilima in 1919. Interview with Andrew Chalawile, 23 Oct. 1997.

¹⁶ Although Harrington may not be entirely honest here, I have no other evidence to support resistance to tax collection. Harrington, "The Taming of Northern Rhodesia", 17.

¹⁷ Incidents Frontieres, 1900-1908, AA, AE/I 272.

Crawford, who had allegedly circulated a list of abuses committed by CFS officials.¹⁸

In 1904 a CFS colonial official warned of spreading British influence in Katanga:

I don't know who first said that the English missionary is primarily English and then missionary. . . . The majority of English colonies were founded in this manner: first the missionary establishes himself in the region; the trader follows him there; then the soldier comes under pretext of protecting them.¹⁹

CFS officials arrested Rabineck, a rubber trader based in Northern Rhodesia, on the charge that his concessionary privileges awarded in 1899 were invalid and attained through fraudulent means. Rabineck died in Belgian custody and the affair brought Mweru-Luapula into the international spotlight after Edmund Morel of the Congo Reform Movement chose to make it into an example of the CFS's violation of international free trade agreements.²⁰

¹⁸ This is according to Belgian sources. Rapport Jennigès sur influence Anglaise dans le Katanga, 18 May 1904, AA, AE/I 271/332. According to Crawford relations with the CFS administration were good and his writings indicate that the administration frequently relied on him. Crawford was critical of both colonial regimes.

¹⁹ Je ne sais plus qui a dit que le missionnaire anglais était Anglais d'abord et missionnaire ensuite. . . . La plupart des colonies anglaises ont pris naissance de cette manière: d'abord le missionnaire s'établit dans la contrée; le commerçant l'y suite; le soldat vient après sous prétexte de les protéger. Rapport Jennigès sur influence Anglaise dans le Katanga, 18 May 1904, AA, AE/I 271/332.

²⁰ Crawford claims to have witnessed the agreement signed between Rabineck and the CSK agent, Leveque, which gave Rabineck a concession over all of Katanga's rubber. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 499-501. The Rabineck affair also led to a border dispute since the Northern Rhodesian administration argued that Rabineck was illegally arrested in Northern Rhodesian waters. Affair Rabineck, AA, AE/I 271/332 and AE/II 2965/833. For Morel and the CFS response see *Morning Post*, 10 Feb. 1903.

Although there were rubber traders, King Leopold's cruel "red rubber" regime was not as evident in Mweru-Luapula as elsewhere in the Congo. After the brutal wars of pacification, there is little documentation to support Morel's claim, cited in a more recent history, that a number of Congolese fled for British territory and "drowned in the Luapula River".²¹ Missionaries reported no mass migration of peoples between 1900 and 1910. The Belgian officer at his Kasenga stockade was proud of his Nordenfeldt gun, although he never had cause to use it.²² Migration between 1910 and 1920 was from the British to the Belgian territory. After an increase in sleeping sickness in 1906-8, probably due to the advance of bush following the decline of cultivation during and after the wars of pacification, the Northern Rhodesian Government decided to evacuate the entire valley. They forced villagers to relocate up to 100 miles north, removing them from their cultivated fields and fishing grounds. Willie Lammond, who also had to move his mission, wrote, "I trust I shall not witness such misery again. . . . More people died of hardship and hunger than died of sleeping sickness." At least 2000 "taxpayers" (meaning men) preferred to flee to the Belgian Congo where the Sleeping Sickness regulations were not enforced.²³

By the 1910s, the conquerors had carried out the bloody work of pacification. Robert Codrington, a colonial administrator, composed a ditty to celebrate the conquistador-like rule of his colleague H.T. Harrington (or *Bwana Kijana*: Small

²¹ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston and New York, 1999), 229.

²² Lammond "Outline History of Johnston Falls Mission".

²³ Lammond, "The Luapula Valley", 54; Lammond "Outline History of Johnston Falls Mission". For an evaluation of the impact of Sleeping Sickness see Mwelwa Musambachime, "The Social And Economic Effects of Sleeping Sickness in Mweru-Luapula, 1906-1922," *African Economic History* 10(1981): 151-173.

Master). Harrington quoted the poem in autobiographical note entitled "The Taming of Northern Rhodesia":

On the Luapula's banks by rock and pool
Bwana Kijana exercises his rule.
Around his boma turmoil ceases not,
Belgians intrigue and missionaries plot,
Witchdoctors brew decoctions to destroy him,
But all these things are powerless to annoy him:
Unmoved, undaunted, undismayed he still
Will bend or break them to his iron will

On the Luapula is much zeal administrative,
I should like to be a native
On the Luapula where Harrington is ruler,
Where the revenue is full and always growing fuller,
Where the rubber and the vine tree grow.
Oh I wish I was a negro,
For the revenue is big and always growing bigger.
Oh what luck to be a nigger
On the Luapula where Harrington is ruler²⁴

If the people of Mweru-Luapula had been, as Harrington put it, "tamed" into submission, it was only through the threat of the whip. The first colonial rulers succeeded in crushing the more powerful pre-colonial political and economic agents who could threaten their rule. However, building an administration that conformed to colonial ideals would prove more difficult.

The Katangan Concessionaire Regime

²⁴ Harrington, "The Taming of Northern Rhodesia", 16.

After pacification and the *ad hoc* division of the valley, a formal colonial administration was put in place on both sides of the Luapula and across the length of the valley. The colonial regimes made a handful of European officials responsible for extensive rural districts. The administrators selected chiefs and then forced them to place their fingerprints on treaties of surrender. The job of colonialism could then begin. Local colonial officials, through their chiefs, started to collect tax and extend colonial visions of "law and order". They had to ensure that the rural areas provided suitable recruitment grounds for labor required by the copper mines and supplied foodstuffs for the growing number of urban workers.

The emergence of authoritarian regimes to support the labor-repressive needs of modernizing industries by clamping down on the peasantry is a familiar historical theme. In the Katangan province of the Belgian Congo, the administration invited expatriate capital to take responsibility for the *mise en valeur* of the colony. Large-scale expatriate capitalists played an important role in all sectors of the economy and the colonial state viewed its primary responsibility as the mediation between private, largely expatriate business interests and African society. The "marriage of iron and rye" in Prussia or the "uneasy union of maize and gold" in South Africa seems to find its counterpart in the early colonial world of Katanga with the growth of the copper industry and its insatiable appetite for cheap labor and rural produce.²⁵ Demand for

²⁵ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of a Modern World* (Boston, 1967), 438; Stanley Trapido, "South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialization", *Journal of Development Studies* 7(1970-1), 309-320. For Southern Rhodesia see Charles van Onslen, "Black Workers in Central African Industry: A Critical Essay on the Historiography and Sociology of Rhodesia" in Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the History of African Mine Labour* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1978). For Katanga see Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Unequal Development: Capitalism and the Katanga Economy,

laborers in the Katangan copper mines and fish to feed the laborers were the economic forces that brought colonial capitalism to the Mweru-Luapula Valley.

The colonial history of the Congo is usually divided between the rule of King Leopold's CFS and the Belgian administration which took over in 1908. While this division was no doubt important from the perspective of the metropole, on the ground in Katanga changes were slow to come. Even at the level of provincial administration there was a significant degree of continuity. In the early 1900s the most powerful political and economic players in Katanga were the entwined administration and expatriate mining and business concerns. In 1906 Tanganyika Concessions Limited (TCL) had collaborated with the governing Comité Spécial du Katanga (CSK) to form the Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK), which was granted concessions over the exploitation of the copper resources in southern Katanga and other minerals further north. A subsidiary of TCL, Robert Williams and Company, began to roam the countryside, searching to recruit laborers for UMHK's mines. Initially, in spite of the BSAC objections, Mweru-Luapula became an important labor supply area.²⁶

During the 1910s the demand for labor on the Katangan copper mines increased and led to even greater collaboration between state and mining companies in the form of a labor bureau called the Bourse du Travail du Katanga (BTK). While Robert Williams and Co. continued recruitment in Northern Rhodesia, the BTK combined forces with local district officers to recruit labor in the Belgian Congo. A

1919-1940," pp. 317-344, in *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, edited by R. Palmer and N. Parsons.

²⁶ From 1905 to 1910 the BSAC, concerned with their own labor requirements in Northern Rhodesia but claiming they feared the spread of tsetse fly, placed an embargo on Northern Rhodesian migrant laborers working in Katanga. It is unclear, however, on the success of their prohibition since they could not control cross-border movements. In 1910 the BSAC agreed to allow limited direct recruitment in some areas of Northern Rhodesia, including Luapula.

powerful combination of state and concessionaire institutions supervised the movement of labor and agricultural produce from rural areas to the expanding mining economy.²⁷ After falling profits in the 1920s, due to increased labor and recruitment costs alongside falling metal prices, UMHK reevaluated its labor policy based on short-term recruitment and high turn-over. The labor commission of 1924-5 recommended establishing a more permanent and, where necessary, skilled African workforce. This led to the implementation of a *stabilization* policy. The mines provided African workers with more comfortable housing and living conditions and in exchange workers were expected to adhere to longer term and more restrictive work contracts.²⁸

The system relied on the creation of stable rural areas that supplied cheap agricultural produce to the mines while discouraging mass migration to the new urban centers. Rural administration conformed to these needs and attempted to oversee all economic and political activity in the villages. The Belgian proconsul, Pierre Ryckmans, called the official paternalistic colonial ideology *dominer pour servir*: authoritarian colonial rule was justified by the rapid social and economic development

²⁷ For a history of the relationships between capital, labor and the state on the copperbelt see Charles Perrings, *Black Mineworkers in Central Africa: Industrial Strategies and the Evolution of an African proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1914-1941* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); John Higginson, *A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labour Policy, Private Enterprise and the Africa Mineworker, 1907-1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Jane L. Parpart, *Labor and Capital on the African Copperbelt* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). Bruce Fetter argues that the administration and labor recruitment in Katanga were often distinct although complementary. Bruce Fetter, "The Union Minière and its Hinterland: A Demographic Reconstruction," *African Economic History* 12 (1983): 67-77.

²⁸ Perrings, *Black Mineworkers*, 55-72.

of the colony.²⁹ Yet how the official ideology informed the actual administration is unclear. Belgian colonial policy was ambiguous and fluctuated between a type of indirect rule favored by Flemish administrators like Louis Franck (Colonial Minister between 1918-1924) and a more direct assimilationist policy supported by Walloon administrators (the Flemish administrators and Catholic missionaries usually had more sympathy for the "national autonomy" of minority or politically-deprived groups).³⁰ In part to appease all, colonial legislation combined features of direct and indirect rule. The ambiguous legislation meant that the nature of colonial rule depended more on particular conditions than on general colonial policy. In those areas crucial for the smooth running of the colonial economy, administrators played a heavy hand in the running of daily affairs. This was especially the case where pre-colonial political structures were thoroughly destroyed during red rubber and pacification. The Congolese side of the Mweru-Luapula Valley, like much of the Belgian Congo, was typical of a *de facto* direct form of administration.

In the rural areas the basic administrative unit was the *Territoire* ruled by an *Administrateur Territoriale* (AT), which in turn fell under a *District* supervised by a *Commissaire de District* (CdD). Mweru-Luapula (the Belgians named it Luapula-Moëro), formed part of the *Territoire de Kasenga* in the *District du Haut Katanga*.³¹

²⁹ Pierre Ryckmens, *Dominer pour Servir* (Brussels, 1948).

³⁰ Edouard Bustin demonstrates this in his study of the relations between the Lunda paramount Mwaant Yav and the subordinate Cokwe. Despite colonial policy favoring "minority" groups, the Lunda were able to maintain their authority over certain subordinate groups. Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, 65-98. Also see Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 128-9.

³¹ Before 1933 the *District du Haut Katanga* was known as the *District du Haut Luapula*. In 1952 a separate *Territoire de Pweto* was created to administer the area around Lake Mweru.

In the *Territoire*, chiefs (*chefs medailles*) exercised certain administrative powers. The existence of these chiefs dates back to 1906, when Leopold, concerned with the revelations of abuses in the CFS, decreed that all Congolese must belong to a *chefferie*. Colonial officials began to invest *chefs medailles* with the authority to govern the surrounding villages. They were supposed to correspond to previous political authority, but in fact by choosing a single *chef medaille*, with a consultative council, the consensual nature of precolonial village politics was altered. Moreover, the appointed chief was always responsible to the colonial administrators, and in the event of his death the administration alone had the right to appoint another *chef medaille*.³²

This *ad hoc* system continued until the 1920s when the colonial administration embarked on a reorganization of rural government as part of a general drive towards greater administrative efficiency. The colony was divided into six instead of four provinces; Katanga became Elisabethville and had three instead of four districts. Mining interests, responding to decreased profits during the Great Depression, exerted their control over the administration and decreed changes that would better suit their labor needs. In effect, the territorial adjustments reduced the influence of the district administration in favor of a greater role for the provincial secret police. Many of the more liberal administrators, including the CdD responsible for Mweru-Luapula, Fernand Grevisse, left in protest.³³ In the rural areas chieftaincies were to be

³² An 1891 decree had permitted the Governor General to recognize chieftaincies but did not insist on them as an homogeneous administrative measure. Bustin, *Lunda Under Belgian Rule*, 49. The process of selection of these chiefs in Mweru-Luapula can be found in Dossiers Kasenga and Pweto, AA, IPAC 14.160.

³³ Higginson, *A Working Class in the Making*, 130-131.

consolidated and made to run on a more efficient basis, meaning an increase in rural production and tax revenues.

The basic unit of local government in the rural areas became the *centres coutumiers*. The *décret de 1933* divided *centres coutumiers* into *chefferies* or *secteurs*. Chiefs responsible for only a few villages were to be combined with chiefs of a similar "tribe" into a single *secteur*. One chief would then be selected as head of the *secteur*. Those chiefs who had no ethnic compatriots or who ruled a large area could remain as independent *chefferies*. Louis Franck had first suggested *secteurs* in 1920, but they only became standard policy in 1933. In 1926 chiefs were given formal judicial power in a local native tribunal. In 1933 each chief or *secteur* head was put in charge of a "Native Treasury" or *Caisse Administratif des Circonscriptions Indigène*. Both the tribunal and the treasury provided opportunity for the consolidation of wealth and privilege; there was thus incentive to become an independent chief or head of a *secteur*. The appointed chiefs would take care of the mundane details of the everyday administration; the *Force Publique* would provide the necessary force should the rulings of the chiefs be disregarded.

In post-conquest Mweru-Luapula, Belgian colonial officials could only collaborate with local lineage elders. Since such collaborating structures did not easily fit into the bureaucratic apparatus of the colonial state, the administration attempted to consolidate a number of chieftaincies into *secteurs*. The first step was to conduct investigations into the chiefs and their pre-colonial genealogy to assess whether there were any "traditional" precedents for consolidating them into a single *secteurs*. The creation of the *Secteur des Lunda* that surrounded the town of Kasenga was a typical example. Here four chiefs, situated contiguously along the Luapula River, each ruled between twenty to fifty small villages. All the villagers spoke Bemba and had close relatives in Northern Rhodesian villages across the river.

The four chiefs, Kisamamba Kikungu, Kisamamba Kibale, Kisamamba Kampombwe and Sapwe, had a similar history in the sense that they traced an ancestral link to Mwaant Yav's Lunda Kingdom. This link probably only referred to the payment of tribute, since the village clans came from the Lake Bangweulu area. The chiefs were in fact only a few selected from many pre-colonial lineage elders who traced descent through matrilineal clan membership: Kisamamba Kibale and Kisamamba Kampombwe were drawn from the Drum Clan (*Bena Ngoma*), Kisamamba Kikungu from the Elephant (*Bena Nsofu*), and Sapwe from the Hair (*Bena Misishi*). These clan leaders ruled along with an alliance of other clan leaders -- their clans were often minorities in the villages -- and did not hold any sort of absolute authority. Although a few might have been Owners of the Land, responsible for the well-being of agricultural and fishing resources and for mediation with the surrounding powerful polities like the Lunda and Yeke, for the most part the rule of the clan leader was not territorially defined; allegiance was through clan membership.³⁴

With the onset of Belgian colonialism, colonial officials selected certain elders as colonial chiefs who would rule a territory with definite borders. It is difficult to determine which clans were left out in this process. We know that by the 1920s the colonial regime had recognized the four chiefs mentioned. In the reports of the period the ATs complained that these appointed chiefs lacked authority in their areas because

³⁴ Although clans had an ancestral "home", this did not correspond to a contemporary geographic reality. Interview with Kisamamba-Kikungu, 20 Dec. 1997; "Enquête sur la tribunal principal de Kisamamba-Kampombwe," *Bulletin des Juridictions Indigènes*, pp. 154-162; Rapport Circonstancie, Secteur des Lunda, 1940, Dossier Kasenga, AA, IPAC 14.160.

they only had traditional respect within their particular clans and not over subjects who had little attachment to that clan.³⁵

In 1940 the AT submitted a report recommending the consolidation of the four chiefs into a single *Secteur des Lunda*, the "Lunda" referring to their story of origin. While the AT recognized the ethnic heterogeneity of the population (*brassage ethnique*), allegedly due to the economic development of the fishery, he argued that consolidation was necessary to cut back on administrative costs, increase agricultural production (instead of fishing which was to be left to expatriates) and make tax collection more efficient. It would also allow for closer supervision of the chiefs. The selection of the *secteur* chief was to be made primarily according to needs of the administration rather than legitimacy or "tradition". In this case the AT chose Kisamamba Kampombwe. Prior to becoming a chief, he had worked for several years as a "boy" in the service of Europeans in the urban centres. With the support of the colonial administration, he succeeded in taking over the chieftaincy in 1927. Since then, for more than ten years, no one had dared to question his authority. The recorded reasons for his selection were:

This chief, between 45 and 50 years old, is among the best in the territory. He enjoys good health, presents himself in an upright and distinguished fashion, is without doubt sincerely loyal and dedicated to authority, has a sound and sincere judgment, his views are respected among his peers throughout the region, he is understanding, aware of the role conferred on him by his birth, and wants to do well. This *indigène évolué* understands a few words of French, knows how to read and write, and is a tax collector in his chieftaincy. In his

³⁵ Rapport AIMO, Territoire Kasenga, 1932, AA, RA/AIMO 106.

relations with the administration and with Europeans as well as natives, and in the execution of his functions, he has always given full satisfaction.³⁶

Kisamamba Kampombwe's loyalty to the authority and needs of government far outweighed criteria based on local legitimacy or traditional authority. His selection became enshrined in the colonial construction of ethnicity; the "tribe" on the west bank of the Luapula would hereafter be defined as *Bena Ngoma*, the Drum Clan. The direct Belgian administration in Mweru-Luapula was glossed over by a thin veneer of "traditional" justifications.³⁷

An interesting postscript points to some of the peculiarities of the creation of a chieftaincies on a colonial border. The *Secteur des Lunda* was situated directly across the Luapula from the Northern Rhodesian Lunda Native Authority under the stewardship of Mwata Kazembe. In the early 1950s, subjects of the *Secteur des Lunda* argued that since they were Lunda they should be allowed to be judged by Mwata Kazembe and not by the Belgian colonial chiefs, who were after all only lesser vassals. Mwata Kazembe was more lenient with respect to membership of Watchtower and punishments were less likely to involve whipping. The Belgian administration argued this would involve an infraction of their sovereignty. Moreover, the rebellion on the

³⁶ Ce chef, qui a de 45 à 50 ans, est parmi les meilleurs du Territoire. Il jouit d'une excellente santé, se présente d'une façon correcte et distinguée, et sans aucun doute foncièrement loyal et dévoué à l'autorité, a un jugement sûr et droit, ses avis font autorité parmi ceux de ses pairs dans toute la région, il est compréhensif, conscient du rôle que lui a départi sa naissance et desirueux de bien faire. Cet indigène évolué comprend quelques mots de Français, sait lire et écrire et est collecteur d'impôt dans sa chefferie. Dans ses rapports avec l'administration et avec les Européens comme les indigènes, et dans l'exercice de ses fonctions, il a toujours donné entière satisfaction. Rapport Circonstancie, Secteur des Lunda, 1940, Dossier Kasenga, AA, IPAC 14.160.

³⁷ The Bena Ngoma "tribe" has had a long life. It is included in an ethnic map of Zaire published in 1989. Zaire Basin Art History Research Foundation, *Nineteenth Century Ethnic Map of Zaire* (Tevuren, 1989).

Northern Rhodesian side of the Luapula in 1953-1954 had led the Belgian administration to believe that from 1953 Mwata Kazembe and the LNA were at the service of "subversive movements" that not only troubled the British administration but threatened to "disturb the peace in region of Kasenga . . . by calling on the so-called community of blood and of interest with those on either side of the river." The AT now argued that the people of the *Secteur des Lunda* were in fact not Lunda; he changed the name to the *Secteur des Kisamamba*.³⁸

The use of brutality was an accepted weapon in a colonial chief's administrative arsenal. When two men accused Chief Sapwe of whipping another to death, the CdD ruled that the men only brought charges up because of "hatred against their chief" (*haine contre leur chef*). The men fled to Northern Rhodesia to escape punishment.³⁹ When two other men accused their chief of inflicting 12 instead of the permitted eight whippings, the colonial court ruled that they lied, and the court clerk who supported their testimony could not be trusted since he was drunk.⁴⁰ Kambo, a chief north of the *Secteur des Lunda*, was noted for his excellent performance even though he was "sometimes brutal, always despotic."⁴¹

³⁸ Proposition de Modification de l'appelation du secteur des Lundu, 17 March 1954, Dossier Kasenga, AA, IPAC 14.160. The rebellion is discussed in David Gordon, "The Making of a Hinterland", 148-193. Also see Mwelwa Musambachime, "Rural Political Protest: The 1953 Disturbances in Mweru-Luapula," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20, 3 (1987): 437-453.

³⁹ Decision No. 18, 6 Feb. 1935, Dossier Kasenga, AA, IPAC 14.160.

⁴⁰ Dossier Kasenga, Parquet d'Albertville 6 Jul 1936, AA, IPAC 13.477.

⁴¹ Il rend grands services, il est soumis, respectueux; loyal et dévoué. Mais il est encore un peu sauvage malgré ses essais d'imiter l'européen dans son habillement et son mobilier. Il est donc parfois brutal, toujours despote. Rapport. Chefferie de Kambo, 25 June 1938, Dossier Kasenga, AA, IPAC 14.160.

Colonial chiefs could indeed be despotic; however, their authority was always precarious. The administration was strained at all points of contact. Not only did the chiefs disappoint the ATs, but the CdDs frequently complained about the ATs. The level of recrimination between the European personnel of the administration is remarkable and, at least in the written record, cannot be compared to the Oxbridge intimacy found among British colonial administrators. A Belgian official who visited Northern Rhodesia found the colonial officials to have a far higher morale than in the Congo. Moreover, he commented, they all seem to belong to the same club and shared in each others success and failure.⁴² In the Congo, by contrast, the CdD of Haut Katanga complained that the "lack of personnel of high quality oblige us to entrust the functions to those with a mediocre or incomplete education and professional training"⁴³ He refused to lodge with the Kilwa AT who he accused of not living an "edifying private life" (*une vie privée edifiante*) since he was having a love affair with a local woman.⁴⁴ In the *Territoire de Kasenga*, the CdD wrote, the AT rarely visited the more remote chieftaincies, and if all was well and peaceful, it was a result of favorable conditions, not administrative initiative.⁴⁵

⁴² Les relations entre ceux des fonctionnaires du service territoriales sont celles de membres d'un même "club": mélange de camaraderie et de respect à l'âge ou grade Tous se réjouissent de succès de l'un et s'il y a des erreurs commises chacun entendra pour arrêter les effets Les rapports de supérieurs à inférieurs et vice versa n'ont rien de rigide ni de sec. . . même dans les instructions de Service une place sera réservée à l'humour. Selys Longchamps, Rapport de Mission en Rhodesie et au Nyasaland, Jan.-Feb.1952, AA, AE/II 347g/2909.

⁴³ Le manque de personnel de haut valeur oblige à confier des fonctions à des éléments de formation intellectuelle et professionnelle médiocre ou incomplète. District du Haut Katanga Rapport 1947, AA, RA/AIMO 86 .

⁴⁴ Inspection du poste détaché de Kilwa, 8 Aug. 1950, Dossier Pweto, AA, IPAC 10.751.

⁴⁵ Rapport, District du Haut-Katanga, 1949, AA, RA/AIMO 86.

The Belgian administration in Mweru-Luapula was an uncomfortable and explosive mix of sparsely placed administrators, roaming police forces, and brutal chiefs. It remained unchallenged largely because of the destruction of all pre-colonial political and economic players along with the crushing of any emergent civil society. The CdD complained of the inefficacy of administrative supervision: "The population have escaped the grip of the *Service Territorial* in the Territory of Elisabethville and Kasenga, and it must be recognized that if the situation has remained good it is due to chance and not administration."⁴⁶ In fact, the effects of conquest and the consolidation of power by a few village despots and colonial officials provided a surface of calm, like a thick layer of oil, over turbulent waters. Chiefs and village elites had few means to organize autonomous followings.

⁴⁶ Les populations ont surtout échappé à l'emprise du Service Territorial en Territoires d'Elisabethville et de Kasenga et il faut bien le reconnaître si la situation est restée bonne, c'est l'effet du hasard et non à l'administration. Rapport, District du Haut-Katanga, 1949, AA, RA AIMO 86.

Colonial Chiefs of Mweru-Luapula

Title	"Ethnicity"*	Admin. Recognition**
Mwata Kazembe	Lunda	Northern Rhodesia 1900
Kanyembo	Lunda	1900-1910
Kambwali	Lunda	1900-1910
Lukwesa	Lunda	1900-1910
Kashiba	Lunda	1900-1910
Mulundu	Chishinga/Bena Mbeba	1911
Lubunda	Chishinga/Bena-Mbeba	?1900-1910
Mununga	Shila	?1895
Putu	Bwile	?1900-1910
Sapwe	Lunda/Lamba	Belgian Congo 1913
Kisamamba Kambombwe	Lunda/Bena Ngoma	1926
Kisamamba Kibale	Lunda/Bena Ngoma	1919
Kisamamba Kikungu	Lunda/Bena Ngoma	1926
Kabimbi	Lunda	?1910-20
Mulengale	Yeke	1928
Kashiobwe	Yeke	1926
Kiaka	Shila	1938
Kilomba	Shila	1938
Kuba Bukongolo	Shila	1913
Kuba Kawama	Shila	1924
Kambo	Kunda	1927
Kapwasa	Kunda	1939
Mukupu	Kunda	1913
Songa	Kunda	1927
Mukobe	Kunda	1913
Mukupu	Kunda	1913
Mulimba	Kunda	1913
Pweto	Bwile	?1910-1920

* According to the "tribe" identified by the colonial administration. Villagers did and do not have these ethnic identities. Most of these identities either refer to the lord to whom they paid tribute -- Mwata Kazembe (Lunda) or Msiri (Yeke) -- and/or to the ruling clan.

** According to documentation in the National Archives of Zambia and the Archives Africaines. It is unclear which chiefs were recognized by the CFS (1885-1908).

Chiefs and Indirect Rule in Northern Rhodesia

Private interests were also important in Northern Rhodesia. From the 1890s and up until 1924 the British South African Company (BSAC) formed by the colonial entrepreneur, Cecil John Rhodes, ruled the colony.⁴⁷ However, the copper mining industry did not develop as early as in Katanga, and, thanks to the contingency of colonial borders, the Congolese pedicle prevented Mweru-Luapula from becoming its closest rural hinterland. After the takeover by the Colonial Office in 1924, a more ambiguous relationship developed between private capital and the administration. The colonial regime in Northern Rhodesia, in a similar fashion to Kenya, functioned under what Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale have termed "a palimpsest of contradictions of accumulation and control."⁴⁸ While the administration guaranteed stable conditions for the copper mining economy, it struggled to maintain a degree of legitimacy in the rural areas, allowing a framework for the reconsolidation of power by certain rural political elites grounded in a restatement of the valley's stories and political traditions.

Different patterns of conquest held diverging legacies. In the Congo, King Leopold's mercenaries had killed the most powerful ruler, Msiri, and destroyed his influence in Luapula. Village clan leaders who had previously paid tribute to Msiri now vied for influence with their new conquerors. In Northern Rhodesia, Mwata

⁴⁷ In 1889 the British government granted the newly-formed BSAC a charter that allowed the company to stake out claims to African territory under the authority of the British government. Rhodes sent a number of expeditions, including that of Alfred Sharpe, to make treaties with the chiefs and stake out colonial claims. By 1893-4 the approximate borders of Northern Rhodesia had been established.

⁴⁸ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, "Contradictions and the Development of the Colonial State" and "Crisis of Accumulation, Coercion and the Colonial State: The Development of the Labour Control System," p. 81, in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992): 77-127.

Kazembe escaped with his life, although his capital was burnt to the ground and his empire no more. Nevertheless, his successors were able to exploit British colonial policy and restructure a local network of client colonial chiefs.

Economic activity on the Northern Rhodesian side of the Luapula differed from the Congo. The lagging development of the Northern Rhodesian mining industry and the distance between Mweru-Luapula and the copper mining towns meant that Mweru-Luapula was not a priority for the Northern Rhodesian administration. The area was officially declared "tribal trust" to be reserved for African economic exploitation. The District Officer, based in the plateau town of Kawambwa, rarely visited the many villages in the valley, which were closer to the Belgian administration and Katangan urban centers. The Northern Rhodesian administration viewed the situation with concern but was resigned to Belgian dominance. In his tour report of 1929, the Kawambwa District Commissioner admitted that "the close proximity of Elisabethville and the road system in connection therewith completely debar the possibility of competition with the Belgians."⁴⁹ Even when the copper industry in Northern Rhodesia expanded in the late 1920s, the fish of Mweru-Luapula were not considered an essential item in worker's rations since beef was more readily available. The colonial administration had little reason to pay much attention to the area.

Kazembe's success in reconsolidating power and patronage networks was partly due to the absence of the European administrative presence. On a territorial level, the administration in Northern Rhodesia followed a similar system to that of the Belgian Congo. Provinces run by a Provincial Commissioner were divided into districts headed by a District Commissioner, which were in turn divided into chieftaincies with set borders defined in the colonial era. Until 1933 Mweru-Luapula

⁴⁹ Report on Native Fishing Industry 3 Dec.1929, NAZ, SEC 2/252.

formed its own province, with two districts, Kawambwa and Fort Rosebery (responsible for the Lake Bangweulu area).⁵⁰ Although the first European bases were near Lake Mweru, by 1908 Kawambwa had become the district headquarters, or Boma, for the entire valley. The Kawambwa Boma was on the plateau. It took a day to journey to the valley and then several days to travel from one chief's village to the next. Compared to the Belgian Congo, with its administrative center on a navigable portion of the Luapula and joined by road to Elisabethville, Mweru-Luapula was a remote destination for Northern Rhodesian officials.

As in the Belgian Congo, the British selected and invested certain chiefs with the authority to administer an area. Yet where the Belgians had chosen clan leaders, usually Owners of the Land, the British opted for Mwata Kazembe's lieutenants, thus keeping the structure of Mwata Kazembe's Kingdom intact. Clan leaders, by contrast, were ignored or subordinated to the authority of the Lunda chiefs. Mwata Kazembe's councilors and generals, Lukwesa, Kashiba, Mwinempanda, Kambwali and Kanyembo, were all given large tracts of land to administer as sub-chiefs under chieftaincy of Kazembe. Mwata Kazembe, claiming the right to appoint his subordinates, selected members of his family for these sub-chieftaincies.⁵¹ If necessary for lack of alternatives, the colonial officials gave Owners of the Land positions as

⁵⁰ In 1933 Mweru-Luapula became part of the Northern Province. Between 1946-1953 it was part of the Western Province, to which the colonial administration argued it was nearer ethnically and economically. It was returned to the Northern Province until 1959 when it became its own province again. For discussions over the provincial borders in the colonial period see Redistribution of Districts in Western Province, NAZ, SEC 2/45.

⁵¹ In 1934 Mwinempanda's area was given to the Chishinga sub-chief Munkanta. Kawambwa District Notebook, Chiefs, NAZ, KSG 3/1.

sub-chiefs. For example, the Rat Clan (*Bena Mbeba*) leaders, Mulundu and Lubunda, became sub-chiefs under Mwata Kazembe's chieftaincy.⁵²

Socio-economic realities set the pace for administrative change. By the 1930s, the valley in Northern Rhodesia was densely-populated with villages that exploited the fishery for consumption, internal trade and export to the Congo. The women took care of the planting of cassava gardens, harvesting and the preparation of the tuber. The men caught fish, which were mostly exported to the urban areas through the Congolese *commerçants* and their middlemen who visited the villages every week. The villagers used the francs to pay poll and hut taxes and purchase the clothes and other goods increasingly in demand. Along the river and the valley road many itinerant traders used canoes or bicycles to sell their wares that they had acquired from trading fish with Belgian traders. Indeed, the relative liberty to trade without the interference of colonial officials, was so much greater on the Northern Rhodesian side of the Luapula that by 1939 a local district official noticed an annual influx of around 500 Congolese Africans into Northern Rhodesia.⁵³

Through trade, fishing or remittances from the mines a new commercial economy spread across the valley, often to the consternation of the colonial officials. The area, with an estimated population of 50 000, was considered by one District Official as:

A mixture of sophistication and backwardness. Well-built houses standing cheek by jaw with hovels. A people in direct contact with industrialization and at the same time a fishing people living in the swamps for the great part of the year. A population probably richer than any other in the Province, wealth coming from the sale of labor and the fishing industry. A people which can fill

⁵² Note on the Bena Mbeba and their pretensions, June 1937, Kawambwa District Notebook, NAZ, KSG 3/1.

⁵³ Kawambwa Tour Report 6/1939, NAZ, SEC 2/873.

its stomach with little labor. A field fertile for agitators but at the same time fertile for the introduction of progressive measures.⁵⁴

The wealthy villages and many mobile traders began to present a political challenge to the Northern Rhodesian administration. Officials complained that the influx of migrants to the area caused "detrribalization" and undermined the authority of the chiefs when the chiefs were supposed to be the cornerstones of local government.

In Mulundu's area, adjacent to the most prosperous fishing grounds in the 1930s, the wealthy fish traders and mission employees challenged the authority of the Chief who was, according to the district officer, not even able to keep his village clean "without the support of a visiting official."⁵⁵ Local administrators viewed the fishing villages in the valley as aggregations of "uncontrolled and detribalized natives concentrated for the sole purpose of making money."⁵⁶ In 1936 the District Commissioner, while on a joint tour of the villages with Mwata Kazembe XIII, noted that nobody volunteered to carry Kazembe's *macila* (traveling hammock) -- although this slight might have been directed at the District Commissioner's presence, not Mwata Kazembe.⁵⁷ Mwata Kazembe XIII Chinkonkole was, according to the District Commissioner, "an amiable old gentleman whose mental condition is open to

⁵⁴ District Memoranda on Five Year Plan, 1943, NAZ, SEC 2/281.

⁵⁵ Kawambwa Tour Report 6/1937, NAZ, SEC 2/872.

⁵⁶ Kawambwa Tour Report 5/1938, NAZ, SEC 2/872.

⁵⁷ Annexure, Kawambwa Tour Report 9/1936, NAZ, SEC 2/871. Informants told me that Mwata Kazembe XII "Chinkonkole" was in fact loved although he refused co-operate with the colonial administration. "He was a very good chief. If the colonial government summoned him, the District Official from Kawambwa called him, he would not go; he said he was the chief, and he can't go anywhere, no-one could tell him what to do. He was loved." Interview with Andrew Chalawile, Lunde, 23 Oct. 1997.

question". He thought that given the vast social changes in Luapula, "the time has come for a more progressive refinement of indirect rule which is based not entirely on the traditional tribal institutions of the Lunda chiefs but has in it the more democratic element of district councils on an elective basis."⁵⁸ Colonial officials were concerned that the lack of modern administrative organs in the face of the booming fish trade might allow for the emergence of an independent business elite who could challenge the foundations of colonial rule.

To be sure, several other reasons, besides the political fears of the administration, contributed to the push for political consolidation and economic development in Mweru-Luapula. Increased Congolese fishing in Northern Rhodesian waters, especially on the lake, had begun to trouble the administration. In 1940 the fisheries of Northern Rhodesia were transferred from the Provincial Administrations to the Department of Game and Tsetse, which was more concerned with their well-being.⁵⁹ More significant in making the voices of the local officers heard, though, was the meat shortage that the Copperbelt suffered in the late 1940s. In 1948 the situation became so serious that the Copperbelt food suppliers had to import 500 tons of fish from the Congolese supplier ELEKAT at a high price, even though much of this fish probably came from Northern Rhodesian waters.⁶⁰ Moreover, throughout the 1940s

⁵⁸ Kawambwa Tour Report 6/1937, NAZ, SEC2/872.

⁵⁹ Department of Game and Tsetse Control, *Annual Report: 1943*, UNZA Special Collections.

⁶⁰ Musambachime, "Development and Growth" pp. 236-237; Kawambwa District Notebooks Vol. 3, NAZ, KSG 3/1. By 1950 the Northern Rhodesian administration thought it had enough fish from other sources, but still desired the development of Mweru-Luapula necessary in case the Belgians chose to close down the pedicle road or force down the price of fish. Moffat to Director of Development, 5 Dec. 1950, NAZ, NP 2/7/22.

mine management in Northern Rhodesia protested against African traders who they claimed were overcharging for rural produce and thus driving up the price of labor.⁶¹ Like the Belgians, the Northern Rhodesian administration began to focus their attention on Mweru-Luapula's fishery as an important source of food for urban workers.

The administration decided to embark on a "progressive" program to undermine the influence of the wealthy fishers and traders and limit the impending political crisis. Two responses were considered and put into place. First, they began to reorganize and modernize local government; but this transformation was to remain within the ambit of Indirect Rule. Colonial officials were to support "Native Authorities" and give them greater autonomy in the running of judicial and financial affairs. Second, administrators set about initiating "development" projects that would reorganize the fishing industry to the benefit of Northern Rhodesia and place it more firmly under colonial control. This would demonstrate to villagers the beneficial aspects of colonial rule.

Indirect Rule legislation had been introduced in 1929 with the Native Authorities and Native Courts Ordinance; this was followed by the Native Treasury Ordinance (1936) which gave Native Authorities powers of revenue collection and made them responsible for the payment of staff. In the 1940s, as part of the modernization program, new reforms consolidated smaller sub-chieftaincies into Native Authorities and subordinated them to a Superior Native Authority. Expert councilors were to guide the Native Authorities in what the administration considered to be a progressive and modern direction.⁶² The reforms of the 1940s did not involve

⁶¹ Correspondence re Trading in the Compounds, 1946-1955, Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines Archives (henceforth ZCCM) 10.1.8f .

the introduction of more democratic or representative political structures. Instead they were to modernize the administration and introduce "progressive" elements without undermining chiefs. District Officials began to transform Native Authorities into what they considered to be efficient units of local government capable of implementing development plans. The changes were, however, still built on the shallow foundations of colonial chieftaincies.

The most important Superior Native Authority in the valley was the Lunda Native Authority presided over by Mwata Kazembe. The reforms coincided with the coming to the throne of a new Mwata Kazembe. In 1941 Mwata Kazembe XIII Chinkonkole died and Shadreck Chinyanta became Mwata Kazembe XIV, a selection applauded by the colonial administration. Mwata Kazembe Chinyanta was the first actively modernizing chief in the valley. Previously educated and employed in Elisabethville, he spoke fluent English and French. Upon coming to the throne he appointed young men drawn from the educated elite to act as his advisors. Luminaries like the nationalist leader Dauti L. Yamba and the businessman Benjamin Kapapula were "ministers" in his Native Authority "cabinet". He wrote the first history of the Luapula Lunda in Bemba entitled *Ifikolwe Fyandi na Bantu Bandi* (My ancestors and my people). He changed the name of the Lunda Native Authority to the less insulting Lunda National Association. In the LNA chosen representatives from the region discussed policy and counseled the chief. Under his chairmanship, the LNA debated issues pertaining to the fishery and to village life in general. A secretary kept minutes of all the meeting and sent them to the local district official. The LNA constructed schools, offices, a clinic and roads in the Lunda capital, Mwansabombwe. Kazembe encouraged parents to send their children to school and visited many of the schools

⁶² H.H. Thomson, "Memorandum on the Policy and Structure of Local Government in the rural areas of Northern Rhodesia", NAZ, Box 95 (A).

himself. Indeed, the leadership of Mwata Kazembe Shadreck Chinyanta set an important precedent for future inheritors to the throne.⁶³

Colonial administrators supported his modernizing influences, if not his democratic reforms (they alleged that some of Mwata Kazembe Chinyanta's "ministerial" appointments had a "history of opposition to Europeans").⁶⁴ Mwata Kazembe XIV was the ideal collaborator in the implementation of programs of political consolidation and economic development. His son, the late Mwata Kazembe XVIII Chinyanta Munona, who grew up in the palace during his father's reign, remembered: "He [Mwata Kazembe XIV] was no less than a European because he was moving with time, planning ahead. When he took up the chieftainship people suspected that he was going to get married to a white lady because of what he was doing. He was a big planner, he was a developer . . . he was brown and fat . . . like a whiteman; that's why he was friends with the colonial administrators both in Congo and here in Kawambwa."⁶⁵

Mwata Kazembe XIV managed to strengthen his hold over the chieftaincies of the valley. The authority of the Lunda subordinate officers -- Kanyembo, Kambwali, Lukwesa and Kashiba -- were promoted above the independent Owners of the Land and Mwata Kazembe's authority over them was tightened. Kazembe became responsible for the selection and appointment of the Lunda chiefs and his approval was required for the appointment of the Rat Clan chiefs, Mulundu, Lubunda and Katuta

⁶³ Interview with Mwata Kazembe Munona, Mwansabombwe, 29 Oct. 1997; Interview with Daniel Mutobola, Lunde 27 Oct. 1997; Lunda Native Authority Minutes, Meetings and Agendas, NAZ, NP 2/1/7.

⁶⁴ Lunda Native Authority Tour Report, 5/1948, NAZ, NP 2/2/4.

⁶⁵ Interview with Mwata Kazembe Munona, Mwansabombwe, 29 Oct. 1997.

Kampemba. In the south of the valley, the Lunda Chief Kashiba gained formal authority over autochthonous rulers like Malebe and Nkomba. Kazembe resurrected the story of conquest over Nkuba and Nachituti's ceding the land and water as traditional justification for the reconsolidation of Lunda authority.⁶⁶ By the 1950s, the office of Mwata Kazembe had been transformed from an oppositional to an actively collaborative and modernizing force that drew on the old stories of conquest. But collaborating chiefs, even Mwata Kazembe, did not exert absolute power over their subjects. Village perceptions of chiefs had changed over the colonial period. Ill-fortune was blamed on the colonial government and the new political roles that chiefly collaboration brought about. Moreover, a colonial chiefs' subjects were now spread from the villages to the copper mining towns. New ideas permeated the political landscape.

A popular mourning song, a type of Luapula blues sung to a guitar, recorded in 1961 and still heard in the valley in the 1990s, laments the death of two successive Kazembes, Shadreck Chinyanta (d. 1950) and Brown Ngombe (d. 1957). The song combines issues of rivalry between chiefs during colonialism, rural-urban migrancy, growing rural wealth and witchcraft. Sung by a migrant worker who was on the copperbelt when he "heard the news" of Kazembe's death, it warns the succeeding Mwata Kazembe that he will not live long for witchcraft abounds in Luapula. Two Kazembes are already dead, presumably as the "Chishinga" chiefs, Mulundu (of the Rat Clan) and Mushota, vie for authority and desire Kazembe's wealth, the "upstairs" house and "suit and tie". The threat from the "Chishinga" chiefs was a rehashing of old

⁶⁶ Interview with Elijah Chibwalwe, Kashiba, 3 Jan 1998. Nachituta revealed the whereabouts of her brother, Nkuba, to Mwata Kazembe in retaliation for Nkuba killing her son. After Kazembe killed Nkuba, Nachituta gave him a basket of earth and a pot of water, representing the land and the lake. Gordon, "Making of a Hinterland", 33-35.

rivalries, recorded in the Lunda's stories of conquest over the local Owners of the Land, that responded to new social and political realities. From the 1930s "Chishinga" farmers left the plateau to set up villages in the valley and exploit the fishery; they invaded the Lunda's stronghold. Moreover, "Chishinga" chiefs, especially Mulundu, resented their subordination to Mwata Kazembe's Superior Native Authority.⁶⁷ A constellation of economic and political forces undermined Mwata Kazembe's Kingdom; the chieftaincy might as well be given to a white person who cannot be killed by witchcraft "because he is the government".

Mourners of Chibongo

When Kazembe died

I was not present

The day I heard the news

I heard Kazembe died in his palace

In his suit and tie

He died in one day and did not rot

When Kabumbu heard

He took leave

Before he rotted and was buried

Kabumbu arrived here

Alas, he landed in death

You bewitchers of the chiefs in the Lunda land

Go and succeed

Mwata Kabumbu is dead

If it is the house you fight for in Lunduland

Upstairs with a corrugated iron roof

Mulundu and Mushota

⁶⁷ Note on the Bena Mbeba and their Pretensions, June 1937, Kawambwa District Notebook, NAZ, KSG 3/1.

They fight to succeed Mwata
 We told Mushota not to succeed
 You won't last
 Because you do not know what killed Mwata

Now we have Kanyembo
 Kanyembo is our chief in the land of the Lunda
 We have also heard at Musangu, brother
 That Kanyembo is about to die
 The suit left by Kabumbu
 Cannot be worn for he is sick

Even though you have succeeded Kanyembo
 You won't last long
 Because you don't know what killed Mwata
 You people, enthrone a white person
 They won't kill him
 Because he is government.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Fwebo mulilu chibongo; Mwata wafwile bakazembe; Ine nshalika nebo; Lelo naumfa lulumbi; Naumfwa Kazembe nafwa kwaMwata; Natie wakwe nasuit wakwe. Afwile one day ukwabula kubola; Elyo bakabumbu baumfwile; Bapangile naleave; Ukwababula kubola nokushikwa; Kabumbu nokufika kwena; Kanshi aitwala mumfwa. Mwebolowa mfumu muluunda; Kapyeneni; Mwata Kabumbu nafwa; Kwena nga ninganda mulundu; Niupstayi we nganda amalata. Bamulundu nabamushota; Ebalelwila kapyana Mwata; Twali mukenye mushota mwandi wepyana; Twakakokole; Pantu tabwaishibe ifya lile baMwata. Nomba tukwete baKanyembo; BaKanyembo Mfumu yesu muluunda; Nabobene twaliumfwile kwamusangu, brother; Ukuti baKanyembo nimfwa; Kabili nasuti yashe kabumbu; Tendamo ena kumulandu ukulwalilila. Kwena nanagu mwapyana baKanyembo; Tamwakokole; Pantu tamwaishibe ifya lile baMwata; Mwebantu kwena kanobakapanyike umusungu; Tabakumulowe; Pantu ni govementi. This version of the song is from Isaac Mapiki recorded in 1961, Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (henceforth ZNBC), Tape ZHS 618. Translated by Walima Kalusa. The author recorded a similar version sung by a local musician in Luapula in 1998. Mwansa Lampson, Kasikisi, 17 Jan. 1998.

The song is testimony to the changes that the office of Mwata Kazembe underwent in the colonial period. Mwata Kazembe's kingdom had become a political institution that achieved its authority and status from interaction with the colonial government and with the new copper mining economy. At times Luapulans doubted Kazembe's ability to survive these changes; they blamed the demands of government for killing the chiefs.

Colonial officials also recognized the political limitations of modernized Native Authorities. They knew that the chiefs did not have the desire or power to implement official policy unless dragooned in a forced march with the colonial official strumming the tune of economic development. But if chiefs lost local legitimacy, they lost their usefulness as administrators. This frustrating bind led colonial administrators to greater authoritarianism. The people of the valley are "'Irish' in their attitude to everything," a District Commissioner complained, "So long as they are firmly dealt with and on the spot they will tow an unwilling line, but they *will* tow it."⁶⁹ Indeed, colonial officials dragged unwilling chiefs into their administrative schemes.

For this reason, the ability of colonial regimes to achieve their social, economic and political goals was limited. Distrusted by the people of Luapula, District Commissioners attempted to administer and develop an area of a few hundred miles along an open border with over 50,000 people and little infrastructure. The chiefs who collaborated did so on their own terms, gaining what benefits they could from the colonial administration while following a different agenda within their communities. The colonial regime enjoyed a fragile hegemony at best, and colonial desires were hardly ever translated into administrative realities.

⁶⁹ DCs comments on Tour Report 3/1959, NAZ, SEC 2/886.

Conclusions

Precedent from below rather than doctrine from above determined the realities of the colonial administration in the valley. That Mwata Kazembe managed to negotiate a settlement with the colonial rulers after his defeat in 1899 provided a degree of continuity with past political traditions. Such continuity was absent in the case of Msiri who was executed by Leopold's mercenaries in 1895 and remembered only for his brutality. After the crushing effect of the early colonial period, the Belgian administration could not develop an indirect rule based on powerful rulers like Mwata Kazembe. Instead, they based their point of contact with rural African society at the level of the lineage elder who enjoyed little political authority and could not consolidate power on his own initiative.

The Congolese state was more interested in Mweru-Luapula's economic prospects and had closer ties to mining capital. This shaped the interventionist features of their administration in Mweru-Luapula. On the other hand, the Northern Rhodesian administration only chose to play an active role in the affairs of the valley after 1940 in response to political challenges and the increasing importance of Mweru-Luapula to the broader colonial economy. Even then, Mwata Kazembe XIV managed to collaborate on his own terms.

On both sides of the river, the colonial states consisted of highly dispersed officials who had a weak relationship to village society at best and were only responsible to their colonial superiors. The autonomy of this army of officials accounted for the strength of the colonial state; but this strength was illusory, for it rested on shallow local foundations, namely colonial chiefs. Moreover, the authority of chiefs was always precarious and frequently challenged; if they were “decentralized despots”, they were despots without a sword of state.

In Northern Rhodesia, chiefly networks managed to become a rural associational sphere. In the Congo, by contrast, chiefs were more closely supervised and had far less autonomy to organize followings. Yet these differences cannot be attributed to differences in colonial policy: historical process was more important than official doctrine in the making of colonial chieftaincies. Colonial chieftaincies were contingent on circumstance rather than structured by doctrine. The implication is that even within a single colonial experience we can expect to find chiefs with different degrees of legitimacy, levels of collaboration and local followings.