



Board of Trustees, Boston University

The Political Economy of Rural Development in Colonial Zambia: The Case of the Ushi-Kabende, 1947-1953

Author(s): Kusum Datta

Source: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1988), pp. 249-272

Published by: [Boston University African Studies Center](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/219936>

Accessed: 18/09/2014 19:47

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Boston University African Studies Center and Board of Trustees, Boston University are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN COLONIAL ZAMBIA: THE CASE OF THE USHI-KABENDE, 1947–1953*

By Kusum Datta

This study attempts to explore the working of the colonial state in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) with special reference to the Ushi-Kabende peasantry of the Luapula-Bangweulu area. The on-going debate on the role of the state has progressed from the narrow functionalist-instrumentalist approach of the 1960s to an analysis which considers the intricacies of state apparatus and the counter-balancing forces which influence the operation of these apparatus, both from within and from outside.¹ The present case study, situated within the framework of the relative autonomy formulation, provides yet another illustration of the multifarious constraints on the autonomy of the colonial state attempting to promote its own interests as well as to act as an agent of capitalism. To do so, this article unfolds the historical process of rural development in the Ushi-Kabende area because development plans provide a unique context to examine the relationship of the state with different classes and sub-classes as well as between "state managers"² and field administrators.

Following John Lonsdale's analysis of the state and peasantry in colonial Africa,³ it is argued here that the instrumentality of the colonial state in Zambia as the tool of capital was considerably conditioned by the social conflicts generated by the process of primitive accumulation as much as by the pursuit of

*I wish to thank Marcia Wright, Martin Kaniki, and Ansu Datta for their comments on an earlier draft of the paper which was also presented at a seminar of the History Department, University of Zambia, in 1984.

¹The orthodox Marxist view, reducing state power to class power, can be found in Goran Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules?* (London, 1978). On the other extreme is Theda Skocpol's view that "fundamental conflicts of interest" could emerge between the existing dominant class(es) and the state rulers. *State and Social Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979), 27. But the "relative autonomy" formulation, as outlined and revised by Nicos Poulantzas in *State, Power, Socialism* (Paris, 1978), still holds the day despite serious disagreements among its proponents regarding the degree of relativity. For a critique of the concept, see Bob Jessop, *The Capitalist State* (1982) and also "The Capitalist State and Political Practice," *Economy and Society*, 9, 1 (1980), 108-127. A modification of the "relative autonomy" formulation is found in Fred Block, "Beyond Relative Autonomy, State Managers and Historical Subjects," *The Socialist Register* (1980), 227-241; and R. Miliband, "State Power and Class Interests," *The New Left Review*, 138 (March-April 1983), 57-68. All this debate is very much relevant to the colonial state too, as although different from the state (or the post-colonial state) the colonial state is not fundamentally different. In this study the terms colonial Zambia and Northern Rhodesia are used interchangeably.

²The term "state managers" is borrowed from Fred Block, "Beyond Relative Autonomy," 229.

³John Lonsdale, "State and Peasantry in Colonial Africa," in R. Miliband, ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), 106-117; John Lonsdale, "States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey," *African Studies Review*, 24, 2/3 (1981), 139-206.

The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 21, 2 (1988) 249

its own interests. Undoubtedly, the main preoccupation of this state, which in addition to being colonial and capitalist was also a settler colony, was to regulate and advance accumulation by capital – both local and metropolitan – but "within the framework of local control." In this process, it was confronted with "conflicts within and contradictions between the different forms of production, non-capitalist and capitalist . . ."⁴ Over and above all this was its concern to protect its own legitimacy and economic and political viability.

The basic dilemma of the colonial state in Zambia was more complex than that of its counterpart in Kenya,⁵ although both were settler colonies where colonial capitalism was supreme despite pronouncements of "native paramountcy."⁶ Unlike Kenya, Northern Rhodesia had to operate within the Southern African regional political economy, dominated by the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Thus, for example, the Northern Rhodesian government could not always protect its agrarian and mercantile capital from the inimical customs and railway rate policies of Southern Rhodesia.⁷

Again, although conflicting fractions of capital did exercise varying degrees of influence over their respective states, the Kenyan state did not have to contend with the powerful multinational mining sector which remained both the boon and the bane of Northern Rhodesia. Since its own vital fiscal interests were linked to the prosperity of the mines, the Northern Rhodesian government was most reluctant to undermine that prosperity. Its Southern African base had given mining capital in Northern Rhodesia an added strength in its dealings with the state. But mining capital often clashed with local farming capital over labor supply, market control and produce prices, although neither could do without the other. And yet, the state could not ignore the interests of settler farmers after having installed them on the most productive lands in the 1920s and having

⁴Lonsdale, "State and Peasantry," 108.

⁵I have attempted a contrast with colonial Kenya for two reasons: (1) it is often assumed that the situation in Kenya and Zambia was identical, and (2) quite a bit of work has been done on the colonial state in Kenya. See, for example, J. M. Lonsdale and B. J. Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914," *Journal of African History*, 20, 4 (1979), 487-505; B. J. Berman and J. M. Lonsdale, "Crises of Accumulation, Coercion, and the Colonial State: The Development of the Labour Control System in Kenya 1919-1929," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 14, 1 (1980), 54-81.

⁶The doctrine of "native paramountcy," proclaimed in Kenya in 1923 and in Northern Rhodesia in 1930, accorded primacy to African interests in case of a conflict between African and non-African interests. For details see R. G. Gregory, *Sydney Webb and East Africa: Labour's Experiment with the Doctrine of Native Paramountcy* (Berkeley, 1962); R. G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire* (Oxford, 1971). In Northern Rhodesia, this doctrine was overtaken by the recommendation of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee of 1931 and later by Governor Hubert Young's views that ensured that the interests of the "non-native" minority must not be subordinated to those of the "native" majority. See J. W. Davidson, *Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council* (London, 1948), 69-72. For the dilution of "native paramountcy" in Northern Rhodesia under Young see Kusum Datta, "Governor Young and His Role in Central Africa 1932-1938," University of Zambia, History Seminar paper, 1979 (mimeo).

⁷Ackson M. Kanduzi analyzes the impact of Southern Rhodesian policies on relations between the Northern Rhodesian government and local fragments of capital in *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Northern Rhodesia* (New York, 1986).

assured them of an overall protection in the thirties.⁸ The state could and did balance the interests of these two fragments of capital at the expense of the pre-capitalist African producers.⁹

The unfolding of the rural development scheme also reveals other constraints on the colonial state in Zambia. In drafting the first ten-year development plan (1947-1957) the Northern Rhodesian government had to reconcile not only the needs of local and metropolitan fragments of capital, but also its own interests with those of the metropolitan state. The issue became more entangled at the implementation stage since the state managers, local administrators, and post-war development experts did not always perceive state and local interests in the same light. The zeal of colonial technocrats to apply their newly formed, and often alien, ideas to the African scene disrupted the rather precarious *modus vivendi* that pre-capitalist African producers had established in their articulation with capitalist relations of production.¹⁰ This defeated the very purpose for which the colonial state had introduced development planning in the first instance – to smooth the expropriatory impact of colonial capitalism on the Zambian peasantry.

In designing its policies, the colonial state had to contend with all the above-mentioned groups, which constituted the appropriating classes. However, it could not afford to overlook completely the interests of those social strata which formed the appropriated classes.¹¹ The largest such stratum in Northern Rhodesia consisted of pre-capitalist smallholders, such as those among the Ushi-Kabende ethnic group in the Mansa District of the Luapula Province, and the wage earners. The latter were composed of the proletarianized, stabilized and migratory workers. At the other end of the scale by the late 1940s were a sprinkling of emergent farmers, such as the Tonga, and a tiny group of the educated elite who could be called the "aspiring bourgeoisie."¹² The interests of all these groups did not always coincide. The colonial state was not only the site of these inter- and intra-class struggles, it was also their moderator – if only to preserve its own legitimacy and promote its own interests.

This study of the Ushi-Kabende uprising, located within the context of the post-war development plan, hopes to illustrate that in the ultimate analysis, the most crucial determinant of the degree of autonomy of the colonial state was

⁸For details of these concessions see R. E. Baldwin, *Economic Development and Export Growth* (Berkeley, 1966); D. J. Dodge, *Agricultural Policy and Performance in Zambia* (Berkeley, 1977), Ch. 1; and Davidson, *Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council*, 72.

⁹Kenneth P. Vickery, *Black and White in Southern Zambia: The Tonga Plateau Economy and British Imperialism, 1890-1939* (Westport, Conn., 1986). For an example of how the colonial state undermined African peasantry, see M. S. Muntemba, "Thwarted Development: A Case Study of Economic Change in the Kabwe Rural District of Zambia, 1902-1970," in R. Palmer and N. Parsons, eds., *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (London, 1977), 345-364.

¹⁰An interesting analysis of how "bureaucratic economy" produced underdevelopment in Tanganyika has been attempted by D. M. P. McCarthy in *Colonial Bureaucracy and Creating Underdevelopment: Tanganyika 1919-1940* (Ames, Iowa, 1982), Chs. 1-2.

¹¹The term class is used rather loosely here since the emerging social stratification had not yet led to distinct and exclusive classes among black Zambians.

¹²For better exposition of this characterization see Carolyn Baylies, "The Emergence of Indigenous Capitalist Agriculture: The Case of Southern Province, Zambia," *Rural Africana*, 4-5 (1979), 65-82.

the capacity of the dominated sections to challenge the hegemony of the dominant sections of the Zambian society and the legitimacy of the state. Although the post-colonial state is not the subject of this study, recent developments in the wake of "food riots" in the country suggest interesting parallels with the post-colonial times.¹³ Michael Burawoy's study of labor processes in post-colonial Zambia shows similar continuities from colonial times.¹⁴

The Ushi-Kabende in the 1940s

The Ushi-Kabende people occupy more than half of the southern part of the Mansa District (Fort Rosebery during colonial times).¹⁵ The river Luapula encircles the area on the west, south and south-east. To its east and north-east lies Lake Bangweulu. The Kabende are said to be the descendants of an Ushi subgroup which had settled early in the flood-plains of the Lake. On the eve of colonial occupation, the Ushi alone consisted of twenty-seven chiefdoms, none acknowledging the superiority of the others. Weak in their political loyalties to their chiefs, the people reflected their individualism through their scattered settlements.¹⁶ The colonial state had partially succeeded in checking the fissiparous tendencies of the Ushi-Kabende by reducing the number of their chiefs to twelve under the Superior Native Authority of Chief Milambo by the late 1930s. The aim of this exercise was to facilitate tax collection, labor recruitment, and the establishment of colonial legitimacy through traditional chiefs. As heads of Native Authorities, chiefs were saddled with the unpopular task of making capitalistic demands on the time, labor and produce of their people.

The economy of the Ushi-Kabende was determined by two different eco-systems characterizing their area. The gently rolling plateau has ferrallitic and acidic soils which are nutrient-deficient. But it has very good drainage and root-penetration qualities which, with the use of fertilizer, could make soils

¹³Towards the end of November 1986, the Zambian State under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, withdrew the subsidy from mealie-meal, the national staple. The price of a 25kg bag of breakfast meal increased overnight nearly 110 percent, from K19 to K40. Public outcry in the form of demonstrations and looting of state shops, beginning in Kitwe on 6 December, soon spread to Lusaka. Clashes between demonstrators and the mobilized paramilitary led to several deaths and many arrests. But the state had to bow before the storm of protest by rescinding the price increase decision on 11 December. *Times of Zambia*, 12 December 1986.

¹⁴Michael Burawoy, "The Hidden Abode of Underdevelopment: Labour Process and the State in Zambia," *Politics and Society*, 11, 2 (1982), 123-166.

¹⁵The present Mansa District, called Fort Rosebery District in colonial times, has always been one of the two main centers of the Luapula area. The Luapula area was until 1952 part of the then Western Province; from January 1953 it was included in the Northern Province. In 1962 it became an independent province. All the sources cited will bear the "FRD" title as the documents are entitled as such.

¹⁶R. Philpot, "Makumba, the BaUshi Tribal God," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society*, 66 (1936); Geoffrey Kay, "Aspects of Ushi Settlement History in Fort Rosebery District, Northern Rhodesia," in R. W. Steel and R. Prothero, eds., *Geographers and the Tropics: Liverpool Essays* (1964), 242-243.

productive.¹⁷ This was never done during colonial times. The Ushi made two types of gardens therein – *citmene* (slash and burn) and *mabala* (grass and weed mounds). On the numerous dambo edges they made annually new *cisebe* gardens out of burnt dry grass mixed with top soil. The lifespan of a citmene garden was three years, while the mabala lasted four to five years. An Ushi village was thus obliged to move every four to five years. And the citmene area took twenty years to regenerate. In keeping with their practice of mixed cropping, Ushi gardens had various combinations of cassava, maize, sorghum, beans, cowpeas, cucurbits, pumpkins, groundnuts and sometimes tobacco.¹⁸

The second ecological system, along the western and southern shores of Lake Bangweulu (lakeshore) had *chipya* soils rich in organic top soils and humic content.¹⁹ Before the advent of colonialism, the Kabende who inhabited the area had grown sorghum and millet in gardens made by burning the lakeshore thicket. But by the 1930s, the disappearing thicket had forced them to adopt citmene practices, move their gardens a little inland, and change their staple crops to cassava and maize.²⁰ This ecological change could be attributed to heavy population concentration on, and overcultivation of, the lakeshore. This in turn was the result of colonial practices restricting movement of villages and gardens between Native Authority areas, a movement without which the local practice of shifting cultivation was impossible. A high population growth rate and large-scale settlement of swamp dwellers in the area after the 1936 floods had also contributed to the ecological imbalance.²¹ Thus, by 1951, the once-loamy soils of the lakeshore were reported to be in need of as much attention as the poorer plateau soils. The cultivation cycles had shortened and the land needed longer resting periods, thus creating "land hunger" in the area.²²

The penetration of colonial capitalism had also altered the existing division of family labor. In the pre-labor migration era, pollarding of branches for citmene gardens was a male job. Preparing all ash and grass mounds, planting and harvesting were the responsibility of women and older children, but with valuable male assistance. Weeding was always done by women and children.

¹⁷C. G. Trapnell, *The Soils, Vegetation and Agriculture of North-Eastern Rhodesia* (Lusaka, 1953); R. A. Pullan, "Soils of the Mansa District," in R. A. Pullan, ed., *Zambia Geographical Association Conference Handbook* No. 1 (Lusaka, 1972), 32-35. Much of the information on the economic life of the Ushi has been collected from the above sources and from the two agricultural and forestry surveys of the Ushi area in 1951 and 1953; see note 20 below.

¹⁸Trapnell, *Soils and Vegetation*; and Sec/NAT/398 F. R. G. Phillips, "The Human Geography of the Fort Rosebery District," MS 1931.

¹⁹Trapnell, *Soils and Vegetation*; Phillips, "Human Geography."

²⁰NAZ Sec 1/431, "Report of the Agricultural and Forestry Survey of the Western and Southern Shores of Lake Bangweulu," by U. T. Wardrop and A. T. Wilson, 1951, hereafter referred to as *Agricultural Report 1951*; Sec 2/900, "Report of a Survey of the Agricultural System and Land Usage of the Baushi in those Areas of Milambo and Kasoma Lwela Bordering on the Fort Rosebery Game Reserve," 1953, hereafter referred to as *Agricultural Report 1953*.

²¹Kay, "Ushi Settlement History," 250-254.

²²NAZ Sec 1/453 *Agricultural Report 1951*. For greater details of population congestion in the lakeshore area, see A. H. Mulongo, "Change in the Economy and Environment Under Colonial Rule: A Comparative Study of Namwala and Bangweulu 1850-1964" (M.A. thesis, University of Zambia, 1980).

As more men joined the ranks of labor migrants from the early 1940s, however, women had to bear greater economic burdens.²³

Men continued to dominate fishing and hunting, however. Fish had always constituted an important ingredient of Ushi-Kabende diet and economy. The dambo and plateau rivers supplied fish to the Ushi. The Kabende caught fish in Lake Bangweulu. While the Zairean copper mines had stimulated fish trade among the Unga of Bangweulu swamps by the early 1920s, the Ushi-Kabende entered the wider fish market only after the emergence of the Zambian Copperbelt and particularly during the Second World War when an acute scarcity of beef had stepped up the demand for fish on the Copperbelt.²⁴ By the late 1940s some enterprising fishermen canoed up to the swamps, bought fish from the Unga, dried it and sold it to European traders who ran trucks between Samfya and the Copperbelt. Many traders took their smoked fish on bicycles to the Copperbelt and sold it at 200-300 percent profit.²⁵

The rise of this middlemen group had added a new dimension to the local social differentiation. In 1951, 11.4 percent of Chief Sokontwe's taxable men were middlemen, as opposed to 9.4 percent fishermen. Fishing had begun to compete with wage employment in Kasoma Bangweulu's lakeshore area as well where 33.4 percent of the taxable males were fishermen, as opposed to 36.9 percent wage laborers. But in the inland area of this chief 65 percent were still labor migrants.²⁶ The increasing number of fishing licenses issued by the Ushi Native Authority – which rose by 38 percent, from 156 to 214 between 1950 and 1951 – is another indication of the growing dependence on fishing in the area.²⁷

Three focal points of the fish trade had emerged by the late 1940s: Samfya, the area of Kabende Chief Kasoma Bangweulu; Mapanta Point where the Luapula leaves the Lake, and part of Kabende Chief Mulakwa's area; and Kapalala, the most important fish entrepot and the terminus of the old Copperbelt road from Mansa District through the Zairean pedicle and under the control of Ushi Chief Sokontwe.

All the same, fishing in the area did not constitute a commercial venture anywhere like that in Lake Mweru or the Bangweulu Swamps.²⁸ The presence of

²³The inability of women to cultivate millet and sorghum alone without the assistance of men in preparing the gardens has been underlined by E. M. Richardson in *Aushi Village Structure in the Fort Rosebery District of Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka, 1959), 20-21. Richardson's testimony is all the more significant as his information is based on a survey conducted shortly after the 1953 disturbances, in August 1953. His survey shows male-female ratio in the seven villages studied in 1953 as ranging between 23:73 and 43:57.

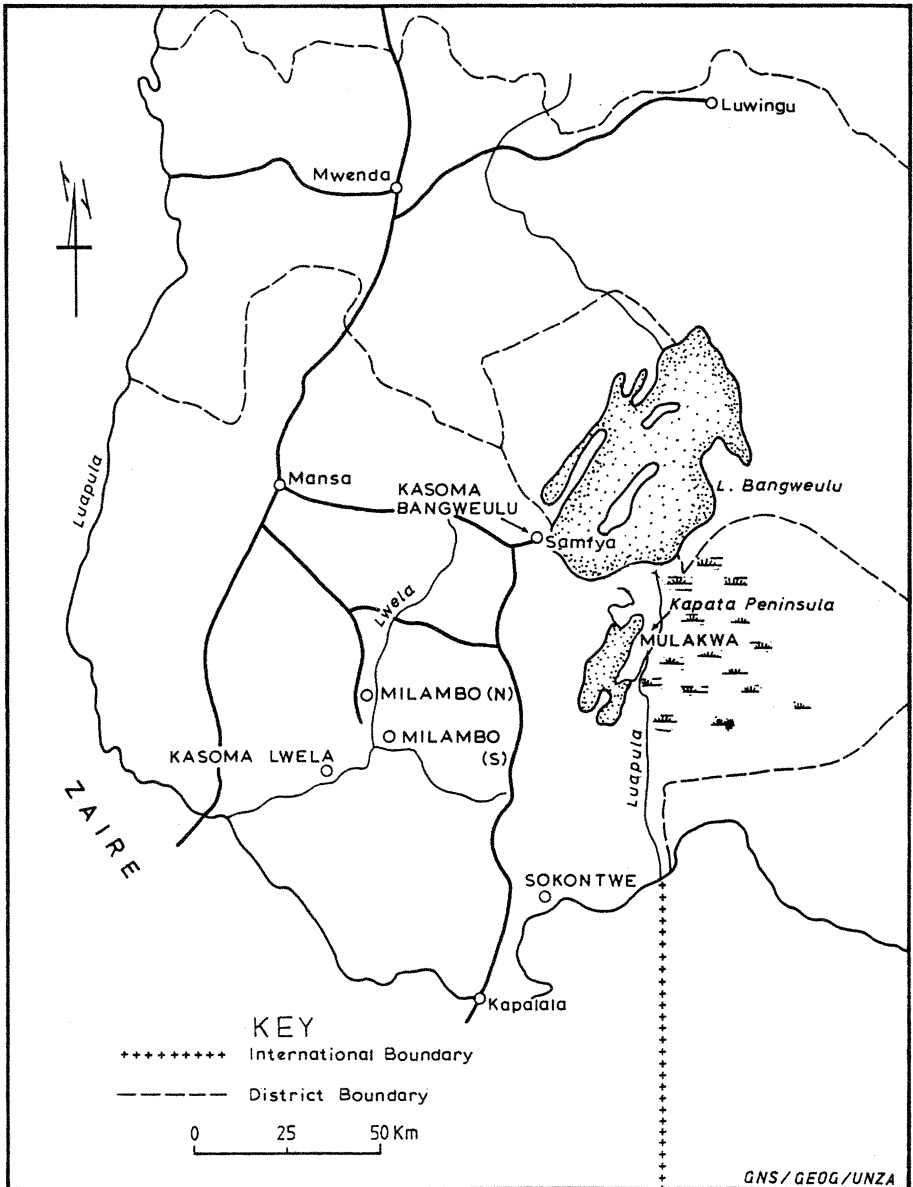
²⁴W. V. Brelsford, *Fishermen of the Bangweulu Swamp*, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper No. 12 (1946), 116; M. C. Musambachime, "Development and Growth of the Fishing Industry in Mweru-Luapula 1920-1964" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1981), 230.

²⁵NAZ, Sec 2/896 FRD Tour Report 11 of 1951.

²⁶NAZ, Sec 2/897 FRD Tour Report 5 of 1952; Sec 2/898 FRD Tour Report 14 of 1952.

²⁷NAZ, FRD Tour Report 20 of 1951.

²⁸For the completely different dimensions and nature of fishing in these two areas see Musambachime, "Fishing in Mweru-Luapula," and Brelsford, *Fishermen of the Bangweulu*. Unlike fishing in Lake Mweru area dominated by Greek businessmen, Ushi fishing was primarily a subsistence activity of the Africans who had neither the capital nor the political clout of the Greeks.



Fort Rosebery District (Mansa & Samfya districts)

the hippo, the rocky nature of the Luapula, and the low level of water in plateau rivers made fishing very difficult.²⁹ Second, most of the catch was dried for local consumption and sale. Fish trade with the Copperbelt was mainly the result of expanding contacts between local middlemen and the fishermen of the swamps. In other words, fishing and cassava-growing remained the mainstay of the people's subsistence, trade in fish being little more than a supplement to that subsistence.³⁰ The post-war development plan was going to undermine this subsistence of the people as well as the future of the emerging middlemen fish traders.

During the long dry months from May to October game-meat replaced fish as a protein ingredient in the local diet. Hunting thus formed a crucial part of male activity and of social life, particularly on the plateau.³¹ Easy access to the plateau woodland, always essential, had become crucial for hunting by the late 1940s as the expanding tsetse belt had precluded any tradition of cattle-keeping on the plateau.³² The woodland also supplied caterpillars, mushrooms and honey as food items, bark-rope for making fishnets, reeds for mats and fish-baskets, and bamboo for building huts. The Ushi relied more heavily than the Kabende on these woodland products.³³ But the game population which was said to be abundant in the woodlands in the early part of the century, was depleted by the 1930s.³⁴ To preserve game, the Northern Rhodesian government had created a game reserve in 1937 in the western and southwestern parts of the district. The 1947 development plan was to further curtail the Ushi access to these woodlands.

Population congestion in some parts of the district also interfered with the local adaptation to the changing environment. The average density of the district in 1951 was only eight persons to the square mile. But due to the aridity and expanding tsetse belt in large parts of the district, there was an increasing tendency for the villages to be situated on river banks, dambo edges and the lakeshore. The average density of the lakeshore – 54 persons to the square mile – was well above the optimum figure. Some areas supported as many as 68 persons per square mile.³⁵ The most congested was Chief Mulakwa's area in the

²⁹NAZ, Sec 1/390 Scheme for the Marketing of Fish and Agricultural Produce in the Luapula-Bangweulu Development Area, by F. B. Macrae, DC, Fort Rosebery, 1949.

³⁰NAZ, Sec 1/431 Agricultural Report 1951; and various tour reports of the Ushi area for 1949-1952.

³¹For a detailed analysis of hunting in the life of the average Ushi, see Geoffrey Kay, *Chief Kalaba's Village*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 35 (Lusaka, 1964). Discussions with an Ushi colleague, Dr. M. Musambachime, confirm that hunting dominated the socio-economic life of the Ushi in dry months. A graphic description of a hunting trip with all its rituals and cultural underlining is provided by G. Kay, "An African Elephant Hunt," *Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 4 (1959-61), 561-566.

³²Kay, "Ushi Settlements"; NAZ, Sec 1/431 Agricultural Report 1951.

³³NAZ, Sec 1/431 Agricultural Report 1951; Kay points out that one quarter of the time spent on agriculture was devoted to procuring wild foodstuffs from the woodland. *Chief Kalaba*, 51.

³⁴Pullan, "Wildlife in the Mansa Area," 46; C. S. Pitman, "Report to the Government," 1934, cited in Pullan, "Wildlife"; and Mulongo, "Change in the Economy," 230-234.

³⁵NAZ, Sec 1/431 Agricultural Report 1951. The report hinted that the game reserve had led to the expansion of the tsetse belt. Similar developments had taken place in the Eastern Province. See Leroy Vail, "Ecology and History: The Example of Eastern Zambia," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3, 1 (1977), 129-155.

Kapata peninsula. Its density of 112 persons per square mile, as recorded by Trapnell in 1938, had created marked soil depletion.³⁶ The area was reported to be denuded of vegetation in the late 1940s and mid-1950s.³⁷ The necessity of moving villages periodically dictated by the poverty of the soils was becoming a difficult operation. By 1952, therefore, the mid-1940s' average of three to four gardens per family in Chief Mulakwa's area was reduced to two gardens. Even Chief Kasoma Bangweulu's area, with a superficial look of prosperity created by fishing, had poor gardens in 1952 and crops barely sufficient for local consumption.³⁸ Thus, while the district had in the past exported millet and cassava to the neighboring districts, some of its areas had to import grain in 1951-1952.³⁹ This made the people more dependent upon cassava and fish for their food requirements and on wage employment for their ever-increasing cash needs. The poll tax, always beyond the paying capacity of the villager who refused to sell his labor at least for a short period, coupled with Native Authority levies, pressed heavily on his meager resources. To make matters worse, the government introduced a fishing license in 1948. The Ushi-Kabende responded by swelling the ranks of labor migrants. The average absenteeism of adult males from the area increased from 43.5 percent in 1949 to 54 percent in 1951, and 54.5 percent in 1953. Chief Milambo had lost 62 percent of his adult males to the labor market.⁴⁰

By the late 1940s local trading in foodstuff and firewood had emerged as a way of earning cash. A small group of traders were running stores in Mansa (Fort Jameson) and along the road to the Copperbelt to meet the growing demand for foodstuffs and small merchandise. Some of them had used their savings to operate transport businesses in 1950.⁴¹ A few women had become successful beer-brewers and beer-sellers at the boma and important fish centers.⁴² They also dried and sold fish. Together they constituted a new social stratum largely dependent upon a smooth articulation between capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. But none of these strata were exclusive. Along with wage labor, most householders combined all these economic activities either simultaneously or at least at different times of the years.

The development plan that was launched in 1947 shifted its initial focus from rural to urban areas in 1948 and 1951. The plan thus failed to promote the interests of any of these local groups. On the contrary, by undermining the adjustments local people had made vis-a-vis the changing biophysical resources and increasing capitalist penetration, it brought them to the brink of a popular uprising.

³⁶ C. G. Trapnell, cited in William Allan, *The African Husbandman* (London, 1967), 147.

³⁷ Allan, *African Husbandman*, 147-148.

³⁸ NAZ, Sec 2/897 FRD Tour Report 5 of 1952; Sec 2/898 FRD Tour Report 14 of 1952.

³⁹ NAZ, Sec 2/898 FRD Tour Reports 12 and 14 of 1952; Sec 2/899 FRD Tour Report 16 of 1952.

⁴⁰ NAZ, Sec 2/97 Annual Report, Northern Province, Labour and Population Statistics 1949-1953 for FRD.

⁴¹ University of Zambia Research Project, History Department, 1974 (Luapula Oral Research). Joseph Kalimensenga, Luke Mumba, Daniel Mapoma, and J. Kalyafye were the prominent transport men in 1950-1952.

⁴² Luapula Oral Research. One woman, Rosaria Mambilima owned a bar in Mansa by 1954.

The Ten-Year Development Plan

By 1945, most British colonies had responded to the call for ten-year development plans in line with the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme devised by the new colonial secretary, Malcolm Macdonald, in 1939. Whatever the early British motives behind this scheme,⁴³ by the end of the Second World War it was increasingly seen as a shield against the growing criticism, primarily within but also outside the colonies, of the extractive nature of colonial capitalism.⁴⁴ One study suggests that it was intended from the beginning to pave the way for decolonization, although the author admits that the intention was never realized.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, the British exchequer and capital were both eager to intensify the production of the agricultural and industrial resources of the colonies to revive the sagging British economy and to earn dollars to reduce their wartime debt.⁴⁶

In Northern Rhodesia, the ambitious memorandum on development planning, drafted by Gervas F. Clay in 1945, envisaged multidimensional socio-economic development radiating from five primary rural development centers. Extending over 7,000 square miles, each center was to conduct experiments to find the right commercial crops, extend social services, and to train Africans who would run the development teams by the end of ten years. To make it "true development on African lines," Clay wished the Native Authorities to "modify the scheme to fit into the social structure of their people."⁴⁷ This emphasis on the extension of socio-economic services into rural areas might well have reflected the metropolitan anxiety to alleviate the acute food shortage in Northern Rhodesia at the time, as well as the colonial state's concern to halt the urban drift of "unwanted" villagers. Such an ambitious program of rural development, with promises to boost African production, militated against the interests of different sections of white capital in Northern Rhodesia. Reactions to it by sections of capital reflect inter- and intra-class conflicts. Settler agrarian capital denounced the Clay memorandum as a plot hatched by colonial authorities in league with "big business" to liquidate European farmers.⁴⁸ E. H. Cholmeley voiced the Midland farmers' fear of "native competition" in the produce market,

⁴³The official version of the colonial development and social welfare scheme is available in D. J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development*, particularly in Vol. I, *The Origins of the British Aid Policy 1924-1945* (London, 1980), 69, and Chs. 8-10. For a slightly more analytical account, see J. M. Lee and M. Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy* (London, 1982), 149, 179, and Chs. 4-6.

⁴⁴Lee and Petter, *The Colonial Office*, 149, 179.

⁴⁵John Flint, "The Failure of Planned Decolonisation in British Africa," *African Affairs*, 82, 328 (July 1983), 389-411. Flint also provides a good critique of various theories of colonial development.

⁴⁶Northern Rhodesia, *Legislative Council Debates* (henceforth *NR Debates*), November-December 1948, No. 63, Governor's address cols. 13-14.

⁴⁷G. F. Clay, *Memorandum on the Post-War Planning in Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka, 1945). Gervas Clay was appointed joint adviser on development to the governments of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1945. Paras 23 to 52 spelled out the details of development centers and the social facilities to be extended therein.

⁴⁸NAZ, Sec 1/453 "Comments on the Memo by G. F. Clay," by E. H. Cholmeley, Secretary of the Midland Farmers' Association, 22 June 1945.

when he commented that "the proposed intensive drive for the uplift of the native . . . [through] tremendous artificial stimulus provided by this scheme . . . will inevitably oust us."⁴⁹ The farmers regretted that while there was no provision in the plan for free grants to settlers, "the native is to have millions squandered on him."⁵⁰

Moreover, by reducing the dependence of the indigenous economy on wage employment, the settler farmers felt the plan would reduce the flow of cheap labor to centers of capitalist production. Settler farmers' labor problems, already acute in 1945,⁵¹ would become insurmountable if the Clay plan were to be implemented. Always critical of the metropolitan state and capital, particularly for defrauding them of mineral royalties,⁵² they now accused these "powerful interests" of having instigated the colonial state to drop their "solemn undertakings" to protect settler interests.⁵³ There was some truth in these fears and allegations. Northern Rhodesian farmers had always faced unfair competition from their counterparts in Southern Rhodesia in terms of regional market allocation, commodity pricing, railway rates and customs duties.⁵⁴ They had survived by dominating the local market through official protection against African producers. The draft plan of 1945 seemed to them like a blueprint for ending this domination.

Mining capital shared the colonial state's concern to reduce the number of the urban unemployed by improving rural conditions. But it could not accept intensive rural development, which might make labor more expensive. Moreover, it wanted to divert the largest part of the development funds to service its own needs in and around the Copperbelt rather than allowing £8.6 million to be sunk into rural centers. Thus, despite their mutual suspicions, mining and agrarian capital joined hands to retain control over the production processes of the pre-capitalist, rural sector.

Settler control over state structures had increased greatly since the mid-1930s when under Governor Hubert Young they had acquired informal entry into policy-making processes through various advisory boards and committees.⁵⁵ The exigencies of the war had given them an informal foothold in the Executive Council. The 1948 constitutional reforms further ensured that the settler

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹The labor problems of settler farmers were so acute that, in the late 1940s, the state had to extend the life of the African Labour Corps, a war-time expedient, right up to 1952 to resolve their labor difficulties. For a better exposition of this issue, see K. Datta, "Farm Labour, Agrarian Capital and the Colonial State in Zambia," *Journal of Southern African Studies* (forthcoming).

⁵²NAZ, Sec 1/453 Cholmeley's comments on the Clay Memorandum of 1945. By the end of the war the settlers had accelerated their campaign to stop the diversion of mineral royalties to the British Government. See P. Slinn, "The Legacy of the British South African Company," in M. Bostock and C. Harvey, eds., *Economic Independence and Zambian Copper* (New York, 1972), 23-52.

⁵³The reference here is to various assurances given by the colonial state that European interests would be protected; particularly the Report of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee of 1931 and Governor Young's statements. See note 5 above; NR *Debates*, No. 60, 1948, col. 338-341; No. 64, 1949, col. 70-72.

⁵⁴Kanduza, *Political Economy*.

⁵⁵Davidson, *Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council*, Ch. 3.

viewpoint would prevail both in the Legislative and Executive Councils. In fact, an unofficial member had become responsible for agricultural and natural resources in the government.⁵⁶ Mining capital too had consolidated its hold over the state as it contributed heavily to the state exchequer, stimulated territorial economy and created jobs. This increased domination by capital of various state structures enabled it to have the development plan readjusted from time to time to suit its interests.

After a vigorous and sustained criticism of the Clay memo, articulated through the Legislative Council and the settler-dominated Native Development Board and its sub-committees, capitalist interests succeeded in replacing the development "centers" by diluted development "areas," and in reducing the training and crop experimentation programs to a mere shadow of their original projection.⁵⁷ But the state's insistence upon introducing and locating three intensive development zones in Barotseland, Northern Province and the Luapula-Bangweulu area – areas which had suffered from the heaviest outmigration of their adult males into capitalist production – probably reflects its concern to cushion the worst impact of capitalist extraction. In a final tussle, local capital made this intensive development impractical by having the rural allocation of the funds reduced from £8.6 million suggested in 1945 to £4 million and then to £1.5 million in 1947 and to £1 million in 1951. As the total plan expenditure shot up from £13 million in 1947 to £52 million in 1953, the share of the rural development vote dropped from 11.5 percent to 1.9 percent of the total funds in the same period.⁵⁸

Much of the development fund was diverted to promote capitalist interests such as public works, transport and hydroelectricity for the rail line area. Rural Africans were advised to finance their development through self-help.⁵⁹ The colonial state had, under pressure from local capital, shifted the focus of the development plan from rural Africans to urban settlers. Even the metropolitan state did not object to this change, since with the introduction of the Marshall Plan in Europe, there was no longer any urgency to develop colonial resources. Moreover, the concept of planned decolonization had run into serious trouble in Central Africa where settlers were fighting for self-government and a federation of the three territories of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi).

⁵⁶L. H. Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia, Early Days to 1953* (London, 1964), 267-284, 344-352, 388-397.

⁵⁷For example, see NAZ, Sec 3/455 Record of a Conference of Provincial Commissioners, Heads of Social Service Departments, Lusaka, 16 March 1945, to discuss programs of rural development; and *NR Debates*, September-October 1947, No. 58, col. 134-138. For a detailed study of the evolution of the plan, see M. S. Phiri, "The Approach to the Development Plans in Northern Rhodesia" (M.A. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1974).

⁵⁸*The Ten-year Development Plan, Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka, 1947); *Second (1951) Review of the Ten-year Development Plan* (Lusaka, 1951, para 81; *Revision of the Northern Rhodesia Ten-year Development Plan* (Lusaka, 1953), 11, 14. Clay referred to £8.6 million in his 1945 notes before any allocation for the plan was made.

⁵⁹*Second (1951) Review of the Ten-year Development Plan*, para 81.

Whatever was left of the "good intentions"⁶⁰ behind the rural development scheme was canceled by the structural and organizational deficiencies of development mechanics. Colonial paternalism had presumed, much against Clay's advice, that it was the best judge of what was good for "their" Africans. The development experts and bureaucrats therefore decided to impose their version of development upon the rural Africans. This consisted of a rigid program of conservation of natural resources. Underlying this decision was the mistaken belief that all African agricultural practices were wasteful and harmful for local productivity and that African peasants were too short-sighted to halt the process of resource degeneration. Their efforts to implement conservation policy with little regard for African systems of environmental control and the biophysical realities aggravated rather than resolved local problems.

The zeal with which authorities sought to implement conservation measures also reflected official obsession with the safeguarding of their colonial resources for capitalist interests. Influenced by the 1930s "dust bowl" disaster in America, the British authorities took stern but often inappropriate measures to forestall a similar fate in their colonies.⁶¹ Measures, often designed with reference to the American experience, were implemented by so-called experts who were "swayed by the winds of academic fashion and only marginally influenced by direct experience."⁶² It was in this context that the Luapula-Bangweulu area was chosen as one of the intensive development zones in 1947.

Rural Development and the Ushi-Kabende

The Luapula-Bangweulu plan revolved around the Agricultural, Game and Tsetse, Forestry and Fisheries Departments, each concerned to halt the wastage of natural resources in its area and to introduce cash crops wherever possible. The provincial area team, responsible for all decisions, included the representatives of all these departments along with district administrators but none from the local Native Authority.⁶³ There was no provision for such active participation by the Native Authorities at the decision-making level. They came into the picture only at the implementation level when they were asked to make rules to implement measures decided upon by the area team and thus to bear the full brunt of unpopular government decisions. Each department had its own supervisors and assistants who were supposed to, but rarely did, liaise with the Native Authority.

⁶⁰ A. H. Mulongo refers to the "good intentions" behind the 1947 development plan, intentions which never came true. "Change in the Economy," 224. These "good intentions" are laid down in the Memorandum of Development in Fort Rosebery area, NAZ, Sec 1/385.

⁶¹ Current research has convincingly challenged the very assumptions of excessive soil erosion, soil exhaustion and ecological imbalances upon which colonial policies of conservation in Africa were based. It is argued that all these problems were aggravated in Africa because colonial experts had dismissed as useless all African systems of farming, land and resource usage and disease and pest control. See Paul Richards, "Ecological Change and the Politics of Land Use," *African Studies Review*, 26, 2 (1983).

⁶² J. McCracken, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi," *African Affairs*, 81, 322 (1982), 102. A comparable situation existed in Malawi.

⁶³ NAZ, N/0054/5/1 Vol I, Dennis Frost, District Commissioner, FRD, Evidence to the Commission of Enquiry into Certain Complaints of Africans of the Ushi-Kabende Area, April 1953; hereafter referred to as Evidence, 1953.

By 1947 the once-ambitious cash crop program had come down to the introduction of rice and the revival of sorghum as staple food in place of cassava. Six of the thirteen rice experimental stations were in the Ushi-Kabende area. But rice experiments failed for two reasons. First, there was little enthusiasm among the people for the crop in the absence of proper marketing facilities. Second, the people of Ushi Chief Kalaba refused even to accept rice seed because of a firm belief that if they used government seed they would be forced to sell their produce at low prices to the government. Since the war, they had had to sell their surplus produce to government agents at lower than market prices.⁶⁴ The experiments failed even where the seed was planted because cultivation of rice, a labor-intensive crop, was well beyond the means of a society in which 47-51 percent of the male population was absent from home before 1951.

The efforts to substitute sorghum for cassava met with a similar fate. Some of the older people upon whom the British South Africa Company (BSAC) had imposed cassava as a staple crop in the early 1900s could not be convinced that it was a poisonous and nutrition-deficient crop. Moreover, the receding thicket and tree line was making ash-cultivation, essential for sorghum, increasingly difficult. Official chagrin at the persistence of cassava as the staple crop among the Ushi did not take into account the fact that in an arid area with a female-dominated cultivation system, it was the easiest crop to grow in abundance.⁶⁵

The paper objective of the Agricultural Department was the introduction of conservation measures such as rotation of crops, planting of fertilizing legumes, and controlled hoeing. Instructions on these were supposed to be imparted to the people through demonstration plots of two to three acres attached to one school garden in the widely dispersed area of each chief. In fact, little effort was made to familiarize the chief, let alone the people, and even less the female cultivators, with those measures or to explain why these measures were better than existing practices. The agricultural supervisor of the district confessed: "I have never myself called Chief Kasoma Bangweulu to show him over the demonstration farm at Samfya."⁶⁶ And Samfya farm was the most central in the area.

In its infinite wisdom the Agricultural Department had decided that early burning of bush from June to July was preferable to late burning in October-November, which was the local practice. The harassed villagers complained that early burning served no purpose as the bush, being only half-dry, did not burn properly and grew up again by October, providing sanctuary for pigs to breed in. And the Game Department banned the killing of pigs,⁶⁷ despite their destruction of newly planted gardens. Even more impossible was the weeding rule. On the

⁶⁴NAZ, Sec 2/898 FRD Tour Report 12 of 1952; Chief Chitembo's people had complained repeatedly of the lower price (10s.6d per bag) paid for their millet and cassava – lower than that in Luwingu or Kabompo (12s.6d.) Sec 2/900 FRD Tour report 3 of 1953. The DC recorded that the Senior PC insisted that people must not be allowed to sell their millet freely in Ndola, and that they must sell it to the government at a fixed (lower) price instead. Marketing continued to be a serious problem in the area for some time. Sec 1/390.

⁶⁵Richardson, *Ushi Village Structure*, 20-21.

⁶⁶NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, J. Perioli, Agricultural Supervisor, Evidence, 1953.

⁶⁷NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Chief Kalasa Mukoso, Evidence, 1953.

one hand there was a vigorous campaign to increase the number of gardens from three to five per family;⁶⁸ on the other, people, particularly women, were arrested and fined 10s for not weeding each of the gardens at least once a year and that too during the rains. First, traditional systems of cultivation did not require so much weeding. Second, any fair-sized – three acre – garden needed one month to weed. Due to a high rate of male absenteeism in the area, weeding became more of a female task than before. Children, being away at school, were of no help in this or in scaring birds away from the crops. Punishment for non-weeding did not take into account the number of gardens a person had. Chiefs complained that innumerable cases of non-weeding offenses against women were brought to their courts.⁶⁹

The Agricultural Department also frowned upon the ubiquitous Ushi practice of mixed cropping. *Capitaos* and *kapasus* – government and native authority guards – uprooted entire cassava gardens planted with millet and sweet potatoes, and charged their owners with violating all those conservation rules. This infuriated the people who wanted "progress in the form of schools and hospitals and not in the form of arresting women and taking them to court."⁷⁰ Women became afraid to go into their gardens for fear of being fined and thus food supplies suffered.

Certain conservation measures were misplaced; such for example was the attempt to force people to make long ridges to stop soil erosion in Kasoma Bangweulu's area, which had no soil erosion.⁷¹ The main problem of the area was soil exhaustion, yet little was done to combat it.

The programs of the Game and Tsetse Department to protect the fast-disappearing game and of the Forestry Department to save depleting forests bore similar results. They upset the local economies without achieving the desired objectives. Admittedly, only a few scattered herds of sitatunga, elephant, crocodiles, and otter were said to be left of the once rich game resources of the district by mid-1940.⁷² The government blamed it all on indiscriminate hunting by Africans, while the Ushi-Kabende believed it was "the Bwanas who had killed all

⁶⁸NAZ, Sec 2/896 FRD Tour Report 15 of 1951; food messengers were instructed to ensure that the narrow peninsular people of Chief Mulakwa increased their gardens from three to five per family.

⁶⁹NAZ, Sec 2/97 FRD Annual Report 1953; by 1953 male absenteeism had increased to 62 percent in Milambo's area, to 53 percent in Kasoma Lwela's area and 58 percent in Sokontwe's.

⁷⁰NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Nawa Kaushi, Senior Assessor of Chief Chimeshe, Evidence, 1953. Sec 2/900 Agricultural Report 1953 testifies that afraid of being arrested, women were reluctant to go to their gardens and thus food supplies declined.

⁷¹NAZ, Sec 1/431 Agricultural Report 1951; N/0054/5/1 Vol. I. Proceedings of a parish meeting in the area of Chief Kasoma Bangweulu, June 1953.

⁷²J. E. Hughes, *Eighteen Years on the Lake Bangweulu* (London, 1939), reported abundance of game there. C. S. Pitman in "Report to the Government" 1934, cited in Pullan, "Wildlife in the Mansa Area," 46, regretted the depletion of game. Sitatunga is a distinct species of antelope found in Bangweulu swamps and the lakeshore-area marshes.

the game."⁷³ True, the number of firearms in African hands had increased by more than 200 percent between 1930 and 1938,⁷⁴ but it is equally true that European hunting remained uncontrolled and its extent was unascertained. Increasing populations and an expanding road system had also contributed to game depletion. But game-control measures remained directed against African producers alone.

The way in which the much-needed game control was exercised reflected official insensitivity to local needs. Without any consultation with the Native Authority, 750 square miles – mostly to the south of the Lwela River – were declared Nsumbu Game Reserve in 1950. Villages herein were evicted and gardens left to be overrun by game and vegetation.⁷⁵ In 1951 the Forestry Department established a Protected Forest Area (PFA) of over 25,000 acres to the south and west of Samfya. At first Chief Kasoma Bangweulu agreed to the PFA in return for the promise of compensation for lost gardens and access to the Area for firewood. But when the boundary traces passed through several villages and gardens, spoiling the second- to third-year cassava in them, he openly revoked his agreement to the PFA. Demarcation of the PFA however went ahead. A ban was imposed on entry into the Area except on the basis of a license to cut firewood. People interpreted it as "selling trees." "Buying trees which were given to us by God – do you take such money to God?" they asked.⁷⁶ While the Northern Rhodesian government did little to provide alternative sources of fuel to the people of Samfya, it promised the mines regular supply of timber from the PFA.⁷⁷

Restrictions on access to forest and game reserves cut off the only source of fuel, game meat, caterpillars and honey for the people of Chiefs Kasoma Lwela, Mibenge, Sokontwe, Kasoma Bangweulu and Kalasa Mukoso. Hunting was allowed only with a gun and not with traditional means of traps, snares, and arrows. The consequent absence of protein and wild foodstuffs from their diet infuriated the people. A gun and a hunting license were well beyond the means of many, particularly as the sale of game meat became illegal. People could not even kill wild pigs rampaging their gardens adjacent to the PFA without being arrested and fined. Their hunting nets were confiscated and burned. There was

⁷³NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Complaints of Chiefs Kasoma Bangweulu, Kalasa Mukoso, and Milambo at meetings with the DOs from April to June 1953. Appendix 4 to the Report of the Enquiry into Certain Complaints by the Africans in the Ushi-Kabende area, 1953. Hereafter Billing Report, 1953. It was widely known that the Northern Rhodesian government had allowed large herds to be slaughtered to feed the armed forces during the First World War.

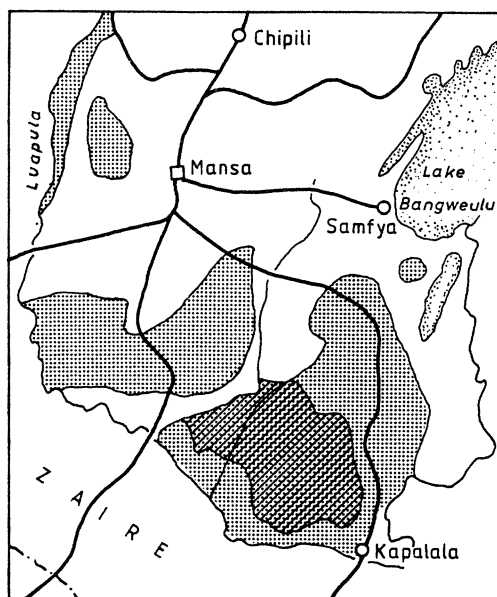
⁷⁴Pullan, "Wildlife in the Mansa Area."

⁷⁵NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, DC, Frost, Evidence, 1953.

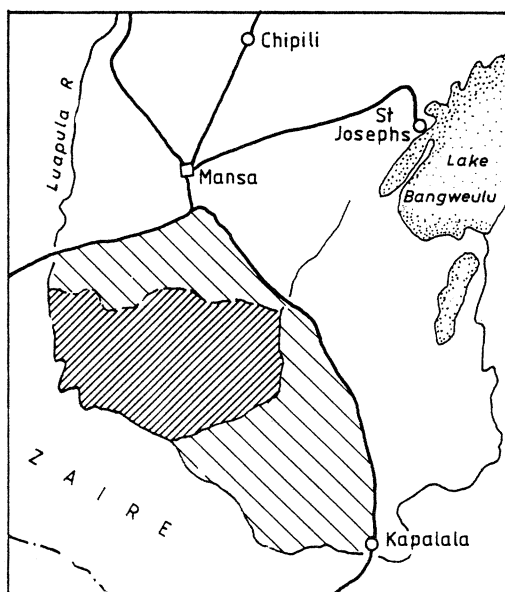
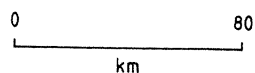
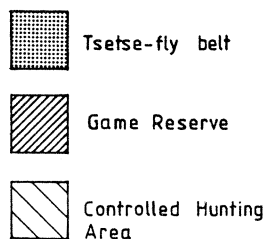
⁷⁶NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Complaints of the people of Kasoma Bangweulu, Appendix 4 to Billing Report, 1953. So strong was the sense of involvement by the people that when the DO asked them to send ten representatives to air their grievances, they refused and walked out in protest, saying "To choose ten persons we have refused because laws do not trouble ten persons but all the people."

⁷⁷NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Billing Report, 1953; and Agricultural Officer, Evidence, 1953. Sec 1/365, Memorandum on Supply of Native Timber for the Coppermines, 1945.

Game & Forest Reserves & Controlled Area, 1947 and 1951



1951



1947

popular clamor for permission to hunt with nets so that "we may keep our children in good health."⁷⁸

The ban on entry into woodlands also deprived the people of *lushishi*, a special bark for making ropes and fish-nets, and of *misengu*, a bamboo for building hut-roofs and sometimes walls. This partly accounted for the dilapidated houses in some areas for which the chiefs were blamed.⁷⁹

The Nsumbu Game Reserve meant loss of all their gardens for eight out of twenty-two individuals interviewed by the enquiry into Ushi-Kabende complaints in 1953. Most Ushi villages found to the north of the Lwela River in 1950 were originally from the Nsumbu area, i.e. to the south of the Lwela. For some unknown administrative convenience they were moved to the north bank in 1931 and 1936.⁸⁰ But they still made their gardens in Nsumbu area as the soil on the northern bank was unproductive. The creation of the Nsumbu Game Reserve evicted nine of Chief Milambo's villages from their gardens and made them the victims of game guards' atrocities.⁸¹

The Area Team was equally zealous in implementing fish conservation measures introduced in 1949 to control "indiscriminate" fishing. These measures provided for a minimum 3" size mesh for fishing nets, regulated fishing by traps, baskets and weirs, and banned the use of fish poison. They also introduced fish licenses for the first time. The local Native Authority had implemented these measures with discretion and consideration of local needs. But after its establishment at Samfya in 1950 the Joint Fisheries Research Organization (JFRO) ruthlessly controlled the fishing activities of the Ushi-Kabende.

The basic defect of these fish regulations was that they were designed by the Joint Anglo-Belgian Commission in 1948 to protect *mpumbu* fish from extinction in the commercial fishing area of Lake Mweru,⁸² but were applied indiscriminately elsewhere in the district. Much of the Ushi-Kabende fishing in the plateau rivers and the lakeshore was subsistence-oriented. Their subjection to these measures created unnecessary hardships for them. Meant to protect the young bream (*tilapia*), the 3" mesh regulation left out the two most popular fish, the *tusepa* and *lumanse*, which grew abundantly but not beyond 5-6" and did not need protection.⁸³ Regardless of these facts fish-guards confiscated nets with less than 3" mesh, which cost up to £12. Those who refused to bribe the guards were taken to the native courts where they were fined £3. This left the fisherman with

⁷⁸NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Complaints of the people of Kalasa Mukoso, Appendix 4 to Billing Report, 1953. Reports of food shortage also came from 1952 tour reports, Sec 2/899; and Agricultural Report 1953, Sec 2/900.

⁷⁹Most of the tour reports of 1951 and 1952 reported dilapidated houses, particularly roofs. See especially Sec 2/896 FRD Tour Report 15 of 1951 where the DO admits that the shortage of roofing poles was the main problem.

⁸⁰NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I. M. G. Billing, "Report of an Enquiry into Certain Complaints by the Africans of the Ushi-Kabende Area," 1953. Also DC, Frost, Evidence, 1953.

⁸¹Billing Report, 1953.

⁸²Musambachime, "Development of Fishing."

⁸³NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I. Peter B. N. Jackson, Scientific Officer attached to the JFRO, admitted as much in his evidence, Evidence, 1953.

a net loss of £15 – and without any relish.⁸⁴ The Ushi-Kabende considered this an unjustified punishment for exercising their "birth right." They resented having to bribe fish-guards in addition to paying for the fishing license, and the fact that they were not allowed to use fish poison or smaller nets to catch lumanse or tusepa, while the JFRO flouted all these regulations with impunity.

The development scheme, instead of improving the economic conditions of the local people, enforced far-reaching changes in their settlement patterns, relations of production, crops and cultivation practices, living conditions, hunting rights, and rights to all wood products. The people, moreover, resented the fact that the planners had not consulted them. In the words of a witness, "The government is forcing us to do things against our will, just as cows and bulls are forced with a rope round their throats."⁸⁵

Finally, possession to the Ushi-Kabende, as in many other African societies, meant usufructuary rights, the cancellation of which made possession meaningless. The people, therefore, blamed their chiefs for the loss of these rights. Under popular pressure, chiefs had to act. In the absence of sufficient control over state structures to influence state policies, they organized an open defiance of the authority of that state.

Ushi-Kabende Defiance: A Resume

At its meeting of 8 February 1953, presided over by Senior Ushi Chief Milambo, the Native Authority decided not to observe any of the conservation rules and informed the Mansa district commissioner of this decision. Kabende Chiefs Mulakwa and Kasoma Bangweulu assured their people in the Samfya area on 14 February that their native courts would not entertain any cases against "offenders" brought by agricultural, game, forest and fish-guards. If these guards insisted on arresting them, the people of Samfya were authorized to drive them away or to beat them up. But before the people could act, the government arrested Senior Chief Milambo and the two Kabende Chiefs Mulakwa and Kasoma Bangweulu, charged them with having incited civil disobedience, and imprisoned them for varying periods. Simultaneously, the three were suspended as chiefs and finally they had their recognition as Native Authorities withdrawn from them. The Ushi-Kabende Native Authority was dissolved to make way for more loyal incumbents. After their return from jail, the ex-chiefs were sent into exile. Lwando Chiliapo, who was Chief Milambo, was eighty years old; Laisi Nsenga, Chief Kasoma Bangweulu, was in his fifties; only Stephen Chabu, who had inherited the Mulakwa chieftainship six months earlier, was a young man with Standard VI education. Mulakwa was also accused and convicted of having threatened public servants – the guards – in the course of performing their duty, simply on the basis of the evidence of six guards, and despite the favorable evidence of six other witnesses.⁸⁶

⁸⁴NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Fisheries Officer, J. Soulsby, Evidence, 1953. Soulsby admitted these penalties were too severe. "Relish" refers to the meat or fish sauce that goes with the grain meal, *nshima*.

⁸⁵NAZ, Sec 2/158 Annual Report, Western Province, 1952; and Sec 2/97 Annual Report, Northern Province, 1953.

⁸⁶NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Kabaisalunda, from Chief Milambo's area, Evidence, 1953; and N/0912/2/2, Confidential Report on the Political Situation in Northern Province, 1953, by the Acting PC, Heathcote.

The dissolution of the Native Authority and imprisonment of their chiefs did not quell the local rebellion. People in the Samfya area continued throughout the year to neglect conservation measures and refused to buy fish licenses. When government failed to pressurize the remaining members of the Native Authority to collect the fishing license fees, a patrol of messengers and police arrested a few fishermen for using unlicensed nets. In a second wave of militant defiance, a large gathering assembled to protest against what they considered "unjustified" arrests. This led to further arrests of 82 people who were tried in the Mansa magistrate's court. People did not buy fishing licenses until the end of 1953 when the government agreed to redress many of the Ushi-Kabende grievances. The colonial state gave in when it found it could not impose its legitimacy even through force and coercion.

Analysis of Ushi-Kabende Defiance

Rural development in Northern Rhodesia was launched in the most politically charged atmosphere. By 1950 the metropolitan state had conceded the settler demand for federating the three Central African territories in the face of universal African opposition. This concession was seen by all sections of the African society as a conspiracy between capital and colonial authorities to deny them their legitimate claim to self-rule. It also strengthened popular fears of colonial designs on their land, fears which had been revived by the 1946 Native Trust Land Ordinance. Under this Ordinance the Northern Rhodesian government could grant long land leases to anyone in any Trust area in disregard of the views of the local Native Authority.⁸⁷ And when shortly after that and the introduction of the development plan, sample surveyors and boundary demarcators descended, with little warning, upon the Ushi-Kabende area, Chief Sokontwe for example was convinced that "we shall lose some of our land."⁸⁸ And, sure enough, many villagers were evicted from the Nsumbu Game Reserve and the Samfya Protected Forest Area, reconfirming the popular fears of land loss. The pattern was quite familiar to some old folks who had seen BSAC land surveyors being followed by settler farmers and land alienation. All this accelerated the politicization of the rural Ushi-Kabende.

The African National Congress (ANC), hitherto an urban-based party, capitalized on the deepening rural discontent to widen its rural base and to strengthen its national character. It linked its anti-federation campaign to the anti-conservation sentiments of the peasants. Early in 1953 Bunda Chisenga and John Musonda, two ANC stalwarts, toured the Mansa area, fueling local fears of land loss. They argued that soon "Lake Bangweulu, the Luapula River and Samfya would become fishing grounds for Europeans" and "there will be no place left for burials even."⁸⁹ By threatening their very cosmology – since the development scheme endangered both the living and the dead – ANC propaganda sparked Ushi-Kabende defiance.

⁸⁷J. Hellen, *Rural Economic Development in Zambia 1890-1964* (Munich, 1968). Chiefs had protested against this provision for sale of Trust land to non-Africans through the Native Authorities, African Provincial Councils and the African Representative Council.

⁸⁸NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Chief Sokontwe, Evidence, 1953.

⁸⁹NAZ, Sec 2/900 FRD Tour Report 1 of 1953; Northern Province Newsletter, August 1953.

The convergence of the federation and the development plan might well have been fortuitous. But they were interrelated in African minds. The Ushi could not understand how development could flow out of the hardships imposed by conservation rules. To them the trees and forests were made by God for man as sources of timber, fuel and meat, and rivers and lakes as sources of fish which they had used for ages without depleting them. Now fish and game-guards restrained their use in the name of posterity. The people believed this was a ploy to reserve these resources for white settlers. They even accused their chiefs of having sold their land to the whites, while Chief Milambo complained that the government had robbed him of his land.⁹⁰

The political authority of the Ushi-Kabende chiefs had continued to be tenuous, outside their religious domain.⁹¹ They therefore seized this opportunity to assert their leadership by articulating popular grievances and by ingratiating themselves with the new leadership of the ANC. Moreover, the economic hardships created by conservation measures had affected the chiefs and commoners alike. Milambo's presence at the January meeting of the ANC in Lusaka was thus the result and not the cause of Ushi defiance.

The whole episode exposes internal conflicts within the colonial state. Although the state had diluted the rural development scheme to suit the interests of agrarian capital primarily, it was also concerned about sustaining peasant production sufficiently to cushion increasing capitalist expropriation. But its own field administrators and development experts, new to the area and ignorant of local language and socio-economic realities, frustrated the state strategy. Having assumed that conservation measures were beyond the understanding of "ignorant villagers," they did nothing to explain the measures to the people or their chiefs. All the same, they expected that the chiefs would go out of their way to educate themselves in regard to local development plans.⁹²

Equally limitless was the administrators' capacity for self-deception. They believed there was no real objection to the conservation rules, despite popular protest against these rules long before the ANC activities began in the area. Their sense of superiority had made most development officers blind to the progression of passive resistance to positive hostility by the people. The forestry officer admitted: "Ever since I arrived in 1951, Chief Kasoma Bangweulu and his people had made it clear in small ways that we were not popular. To this day my African staff have been unable to buy food locally although there is no food shortage. Boundary posts have been knocked down from time to time."⁹³

When the administrators took no heed of these expressions of discontent, the Samfya people started accusing their Chief Kasoma Bangweulu of having sold their land to the government. The touring officer in mid-1952 found the Chief "worried in regard to development project at Samfya and the establishment of the Forest Reserve in his area . . . imagining that his country is being taken

⁹⁰NAZ, Sec 2/899 FRD Tour Report 4 of 1952.

⁹¹Kay, "Ushi Settlement History," 241-242.

⁹²NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Soulsby, Fisheries Officer, and J. Cairn, Forest Officer, Evidence, 1953.

⁹³NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, Forest Officer, Evidence, 1953.

away from him"⁹⁴ Even after the Chief had openly revoked his acceptance of the Forest Reserve in Samfya, the officials argued that no objections had been raised.

So great was their sense of complacency that even after the arrest of the chiefs the administrators felt no need to probe the causes of the unrest. Instead of objectively looking at their ill-conceived and ineptly enforced development plan, the officials and technocrats chose to hold the ANC "agitators" responsible for the whole episode. Chief Milambo was said to have been incited by "unscrupulous agitators" and "false prophets" as "it all started after his return from [an ANC meeting in] Lusaka"⁹⁵ Appointed well over two and a half months after the February uprising, the commission of enquiry failed to fathom the depth of local hardship despite the revealing evidence given by twenty-five Ushi-Kabende commoners and three chiefs, and despite a petition by the Ushi of Lusaka against the government handling of the problem.⁹⁶ The commission chairman, M. G. Billing, who was also the northern provincial commissioner, dismissed the idea that conservation measures had caused any "genuine hardship." "Alleged shortage" of cultivable land and of various wood products, loss of hunting rights and fishing restrictions were only "minor irritations," he said. The development plan, he concluded, was unpopular because "the Ushi are lazy . . . and ignorant."⁹⁷

The deep roots of popular discontent were revealed by new developments in the course of the year 1953 when popular hostility to conservation rules became more entrenched. The atmosphere in Chief Milambo's area varied from "sullen resentment to outspoken opposition." The villagers refused to greet the touring district commissioner (DC) or to bring food and water to his camp. In Chief Kasoma Lwela's area they did bring food but well after dark.⁹⁸ Defiance continued to be articulated through the people's refusal to select a new Chief Milambo: "If a new chief were appointed he would be appointed by the bwanas and not by the people," they told the DC.⁹⁹ In June 1953 the people asked the government to withdraw all the technocrats and development projects from the area and to leave them alone with what God had given them. There could be no more outspoken renunciation of the extractive nature of the development plan.

When even police action failed to make people buy fishing licenses and observe conservation rules, the colonial state gave in to many of the popular demands by the end of 1953. Access to the Samfya PFA and Nsumbu Game

⁹⁴NAZ, Sec 2/898 FRD Tour Report 14 of 1952.

⁹⁵NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. I, J. Miller, Under-Ranger, Evidence, 1953.

⁹⁶In addition, 50 Ushi, resident in Lusaka, sent a petition to the government not to replace Chief Milambo who, they said, had only carried out popular wishes. Moreover, all the Ushi argued that a new chief could not be appointed as long as the existing incumbent was alive. N/0054/5/1 Baushi Petition from Lusaka to Secretary for Native Affairs, 23 May 1953. Despite a government-appointed chief in 1953, the old incumbent Lwando Chiliapo was still regarded as the real chief by the people in 1960. Kay, "Elephant Hunt," 563.

⁹⁷Billing Report, 1953.

⁹⁸NAZ N/0912/2/2, 6.6.F, 2611, Special Confidential Report on the areas of Chiefs Milambo and Kasoma Lwela, Appendix 4 to Billing Report, 1953.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

Reserve was restored for cultivation and collection purposes, and the boundaries of the Game Reserve were modified. By 1954 restrictions on *lumanse* fishing were lifted and those on fishing by traditional methods were modified. The highhanded agricultural *kapasus* and fish and game-guards were replaced by new incumbents. Equally significant was the inclusion of an African in the area team to represent the African point of view.¹⁰⁰ Although in their application some of these decisions remained ineffective, the fact that the state had found it necessary to bow before the storm proves that it could not ignore the local dynamics if the expropriation of surplus value were to continue and the legitimacy of the colonial state to be preserved. Moreover, such popular opposition gave the state an ideal excuse to slacken its tempo in the direction of real rural development.

For another three years little was done by way of development in the area, the prime concern of the state being the maintenance of law and order. Two of the deposed chiefs were allowed to return to their areas in 1956; Kasoma Bangweulu could not return until 1958 due to his refusal to "recant."

Conclusion

It is argued here that the colonial state in Zambia had to contend with highly conflicting forces in preserving its legitimacy without endangering the conditions necessary for maintaining the dominant social and economic forces. The state drafted a ten-year development plan in 1945 primarily to meet urgent metropolitan needs. But under pressure from the local agrarian capital, it had to drastically prune the rural development section of the plan in 1948 and 1951. This ensured the continued dependence of African subsistence economy upon capitalist relations of production. To smooth the extractive impact of capitalism on subsistence producers – absolutely imperative for preserving the social order – the state salvaged part of the rural development scheme by locating three intensive development zones in areas from which mining and agrarian capital drew most of its cheap labor: Barotseland, Northern Province, and the Luapula-Bangweulu area.

In the process of its implementation by technocrats and local administrators, the rural development scheme, instead of improving their economy, undercut the capacity of the Ushi-Kabende smallholders to generate the essential cash locally. More significantly, it threatened the very basis of their subsistence by disrupting the existing systems of resource utilization and environment control. When the Ushi-Kabende defied state authority to assert their inherent right to their resources, the colonial state had to stage a tactical withdrawal, but without changing its strategy. To restore the social order and its own legitimacy the state had to be seen to act, in Mamdani's words, as the protector of the national interest.¹⁰¹

The case of the Ushi-Kabende, forcing the colonial state to take note of their interests, is not unique. Numerous parallels can be drawn across the colonial

¹⁰⁰ NAZ N/0054/5/1 Vol. III, Minutes of a conversation between Governor G. Rennie, PC, M. G. Billing and SNA R. P. Bush, 14 Nov. 1953; also a minute by Billing to SNA recommending all these changes which were implemented in 1954.

¹⁰¹ Mahmoud Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (London, 1976), 13.

board.¹⁰² It may be argued that even post-colonial states in Africa seem to be subject to similar constraints. If anything, their sensitivity to the smallholder on the one hand and international capital (e.g. the IMF and the World Bank) on the other, seems to have constrained their relative autonomy more than that of the colonial state. Furthermore, few post-colonial development plans have been tailored to the real local needs, thus ensuring their failure to halt rural stagnation in most African states.

¹⁰²For a similar popular response to inappropriate agricultural measures elsewhere, see J. Gus Liebnow, *Colonial Rule and Political Development in Tanzania: The Case of the Makonde* (Nairobi, 1971), 107-108, 217-220; Lionel Cliffe, "Nationalism and the Reaction to Enforced Agricultural Change in Tanganyika During the Colonial Period," *Taamuti: Political Science Forum*, 1 (July 1970), 1-15; Past and Present Society, *Agrarian Unrest in British and French Africa, British India and French Indo-China* (Oxford, 1982) provides many comparable studies.