

Comparing the Copperbelt: Social History and Knowledge Production in Central Africa

University of Oxford (online via Zoom) - 18-19 June 2021

ABSTRACTS

Day 1, Friday 18 June

09:15 – 10:45 Panel 1: States, Unions and Mining

Hyden Munene (Free State): ‘Black Horse White Rider’: The Evolution of Labour and Racial Relations in the Copperbelt Mines, 1928–1991’

Using unpublished primary material obtained from the National Archives of Zambia in Lusaka, the United National Independence Party Archive also in Lusaka, the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines Archive in Ndola, and Mineworkers’ Union of Zambia Headquarters in Kitwe, this paper examines the evolution of labour and racial relations in the Northern Rhodesian later Zambian mining sector between 1928 and 1991. In the period under consideration, labour and racial relations on the Northern Rhodesian / Zambian Copperbelt were changed by the introduction of the dual (European and African) labour structure comprised of a segregated workforce and separate trade unions, as well as the impact of the colour bar, African Advancement, indigenisation and Zambianisation policies. The paper argues that the Copperbelt mining companies’ efforts to fight white racism, abolish the colour bar, and advance Africans into identical / ragged-edge, intermediate, and supervisory jobs given to or reserved for Europeans in the sector were undermined by the impact of the dual labour structure and racial segregation, which maintained the privileged position of white workers. Despite a change of government in 1964 and the emphasis on rapid indigenisation and Zambianisation in the industry, white miners remained entrenched in technical, managerial, and supervisory positions, which undermined the advancement of Africans into these jobs. Inequalities embedded in the dual labour and wage structure undermined the government and Copperbelt mining companies’ efforts to improve industrial/racial relations in the industry.

Timothy Makori (Maastricht): ‘The Extrastatecraft of Artisanal Mines in the Congolese Copperbelt’

Discourse on the future of mining in the Congo is inflected by the claim that mining will only flourish if guaranteed by the might and mechanisms of industrial capital. Underpinning this view is nostalgia for a return to corporate welfarism but also a frustration over the meagre returns and overbearing toil demanded by artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Policy experts tell us that ASM can be made more productive if reforms dwell on the formalization of the activity yet, local critics expose this claim as masking a desire for



the improvement of the conditions of extraction with the will to govern a recalcitrant population of ASM mine labour. To draw attention to how competing optics about the future of mining in the Congo Copperbelt obfuscate not only the past but also the contemporary realities on the ground, I explore how artisanal mines have emerged as active sites of conflict and spaces of struggle over resources, infrastructure and identity among state, non-state, market and non-market actors. My interest is in how multiple forces outside of and in addition to the state intervene with considerable power and administrative authority to reorder infrastructure and production within ASM sites. Drawing on the literature on extractivism and infrastructure governance, I sketch out the history of changing paradigms of control in an artisanal mine on the outskirts of the city of Likasi. I argue that a look at how state agents manage and mutate the affairs of the state in an artisanal mine as they encounter powerful competing interests offers a window to analyzing historical change in the Congo Copperbelt.

Thomas McNamara (LaTrobe): ‘The Unions have Reoriented Towards Entrepreneurship: Neoliberal Solidarities on Zambia’s Copperbelt’

Extensive labour subcontracting has decimated workers’ incomes and unions’ power on Zambia’s Copperbelt. In response, ongoing and subcontracted workers provide each other daily material support, while unions sell credit-based services to members, enabling their daily lives and subsidizing subcontractors’ unionisation. These interactions made Zambia’s low-wage resource extraction viable. They can therefore be understood as neoliberal solidarities: struggles to refashion material and social relations in a more equitable way, while structurally supporting neoliberal political economies and projects of self-making. These solidarities entrenched union-company interdependence, empowering unions to enact a more radical project, yet made this project more difficult to imagine.

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 3: ‘Comparing the Copperbelt’: Papers from the University of Lubumbashi - *note, this panel will be held in French*

Michael Kasombo Tshibanda, Agnès Mwamba Chomba and Diane Kabedy’a Sombw (UNILU): ‘Toponymie urbaine: réglementation hier et aujourd’hui dans le Copperbelt congolais et zambien. Etude comparative’

Résumé A l’époque coloniale, la toponymie urbaine était réglementée de manière à pérenniser la mémoire collective et l’histoire commune, le renforcement de l’unité nationale obligeait. Une telle législation/politique appelait une collaboration entre entreprises minières et services municipaux compétents. A l’époque postcoloniale le Copperbelt, congolais plus que zambien, s’éloignerait de cette tradition coloniale. Si les noms des villes, communes, quartiers, camps des travailleurs d’entreprises hérités de la colonisation (inclus ceux des rues, avenues, parcs, bâtiments publics ...) sont en général maintenus, tel n’est pas le cas de ceux des/dans (les) quartiers, communes récemment lotis. Une réelle anarchie toponymique y règne : presque seuls les premiers occupants des avenues nouvellement tracées les baptisent, notamment de leurs propres noms, avec l’accord complice des chefs de quartiers. Souvent, les noms des enseignes sur des bâtiments et kiosques environnants ou de toute autre référence proche sont spontanément attribués par la population aux arrêts de bus, avenues, quartiers et autres places publiques en marge d’une réglementation qui aurait pu émaner l’autorité municipale. Cette communication d’approche



onomastique questionne la baptismation des espaces urbains en lotissement continu et vise une analyse formelle et sémantique des toponymes destinée à dégager les motivations de la dation du nom et l'orientation-même de la réglementation coloniale. Au reste, le pouvoir public appréciera le potentiel de la discipline (grâce à des champs de l'onomastique inexploités jusqu'à ce jour : dendronymie, zoonymie, herpetonymie, ornithonymie ...) à assurer la densification continue de la toponymie urbaine dans le respect de la réglementation, elle-aussi à actualiser. Réglementation et toponymes à densifier auront pour vocation : pérenniser la mémoire populaire, l'histoire commune, l'unité nationale.

Jean-Pierre Kalembwe Longwa (UNILU): 'Trafic transfrontalier dans le Copperbelt Zambie-Congo : le phénomène "Bilanga"'

Les changements sociopolitiques et économiques qu'a connus le Copperbelt Congo-Zambie au cours de son histoire ont affecté les échanges commerciaux entre les peuples et les états. Les sociétés lignagères, qui y vivaient, entretenaient des relations commerciales entre elles et avec d'autres peuples dont les Arabes selon certaines règles. Pendant la colonisation, parallèlement au trafic régulier passant par la douane de deux pays, la Rhodésie du Nord et le Congo, des échanges commerciaux se sont aussi effectués de manière non officielle. Après l'indépendance, ce trafic a continué et a pris le nom de « Bilanga ». « Bilanga », un terme signifiant brousse, forêt, champs, en langue lingala parlée en République démocratique du Congo, traduit la réalité du trafic transfrontalier entre la République de Zambie et la République démocratique du Congo pendant la colonisation et après l'indépendance. Ce phénomène qui, au départ, était l'œuvre des familles vivant de part et d'autre de la frontière, s'est étendu à d'autres acteurs et s'est beaucoup intensifié. L'explication de ce phénomène est à rechercher dans les différentes mutations socio-politiques et économiques survenues dans les deux pays voisins : la Zambie et la République démocratique du Congo.

Ken Anastase Mwembu Dibwe (UNILU): 'Logique de vote dans l'espace Copperbelt RDC-Zambie (Essai d'analyse critique sur les motivations du vote)'

L'espace de la Copperbelt ou de la ceinture du cuivre qui s'étend du centre minier de Kolwezi, en RDC, au foyer minier de Ndola, en Zambie habité par les Bemba, qui ont été colonisés par deux puissances européennes : la Belgique et l'Angleterre. Cet espace est soumis, de part et d'autre de la frontière internationale, à l'exploitation minière. L'industrie et l'exploitation minière y attire et concentre diverses populations d'origines et de races différentes et ont été à l'origine de la création et de la croissance des centres urbains aux multiples fonctions politiques, économiques, sociales et culturelles¹. Cette région, du moins en ce qui concerne la RDC qui est le cadre d'étude de la présente étude, constitue ce que J. Cornet a appelé « scandale géologique » et, a été attractif au début puis, répulsif par rapports aux non originaires. Cette situation de répulsion ou discrimination de non originaire par les autochtones qui est en fait, une instrumentalisation du politique congolais, ayant pour principe « diviser pour mieux régner » s'est même manifesté lors des élections de 2006, 2011 voire 2018 en RDC de manière générale et, l'espace Copperbelt-

¹ L. Mottoulle, « Contribution à l'historique des recrutements et emplois de la MOI dans les territoires du CSK », *Bulletin CEPSI*, vol. VII, 1950, p. 13-27 ; E.L. Berger, *Labour, race and colonial rule : The copperbelt from 1924 to independence*, Oxford, 1974 ;



RDC en particulier. Ainsi, ce papier s'avère une étude qui cherche à expliquer les rapports existant entre la présence de minerais et la motivation de vote des autochtones de l'espace Copperbelt RDC.

Day 2, Saturday 19 June

09:30 – 11:00 Panel 4: Historiography, Methodology and Knowledge Production

Beatriz Serrazina (Coimbra): 'Expanding the Copperbelt: Crossborder Connections with Angola'

The Cape-to-Katanga team, a group of private enterprises set up to exploit and explore “colonial blocs” of “Afrique utile” (Vellut, 1982; Boone, 1998) throughout the 20th century, benefited from an intense circulation of knowledge between borders. These powerful, but often untapped, transnational relationships laid down another map of Africa, that hardly corresponded to political imperial boundaries. It was probably a stronger outlook of the territory, that despite being created under the colonial rule, surpassed its very end. Amid these flows, Copperbelt was seen as a “bastion of modernity” (Epstein, 1981) that would play an important role on the production of expertise, models and “welfare” methods (Cooper, 1983). This paper aims to shed light into some of these wider streams that may contribute to frame a bigger picture of the significance of the Copperbelt on the outline of (post-)colonial Africa. It will assess the entanglements and connections between the Copperbelt and one of the biggest mining enterprises in Angola – the Angola Diamond Company (Diamang), that operated in the northeastern border, right next to the former Belgian Congo – to understand the impact of these flows of people and ideas on an intercolonial (re)production of the urban scene. It will cover the production of technical know-how (mostly on buildings and urban design) and question its echoes on social-spatial dynamics (instrumentalisation and usages of space, worker's memories). As local populations were left with dashed “expectations of modernity” (Ferguson, 1999), exploring historical perspectives seems paramount to understand the present and future of these interconnected places.

Miyanda Simabwachi (Chalimbana): 'A History of the Copperbelt Mining Companies' Archives: Past and Present'

Copper mining in the Copperbelt has been the mainstay of Zambia's economy from the early 1920s. In the course of mining activities, mining organisations generated archival documents which have shaped a particular understanding of the social, political and mining history of the Copperbelt. As primary sources documenting precedents for national development and a basis for scholarly research, they necessitated their centralisation for permanent preservation at the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) Archives. This paper intends to discuss a key aspect of historical knowledge production both in the colonial and post-colonial contexts through a history of the mining companies' archives of the Copperbelt. The paper intends to demonstrate that despite archives' crucial contribution to production of historical knowledge, on the Copperbelt, they also have their own history which is linked to mining companies' operation structures, legal frameworks and political-economic forces. In particular, the paper will discuss the formation of colonial and post-colonial archival documents generated by the Copperbelt's mining organisations. The discussion will focus on the provenance, preservation strategies, management practices, archival policies and the role of



political and economic forces that influenced the shape of the Copperbelt's archives. In particular, this paper will demonstrate how the complex political and economic transformations in form of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Nationalisation and Privatisation influenced the manner in which archives were generated, preserved, managed, accessed and archives policy designed.

Miles Larmer (Oxford): 'Historicising Knowledge Production and the Social History of the Copperbelt'

This paper, drawing on my forthcoming book *Living for the City: Social Change and Knowledge Production in the Central African Copperbelt*, argues that knowledge production, both elite and popular, has been central to shaping the social history of the region. The ideas of African communities about Copperbelt urbanity interacted throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century with successive iterations of official/academic representations of a new 'modern' space in ways that distorted Copperbelt communities' lived experiences but which were central to claim-making. This paper will outline the book's key arguments and draw on one or two examples of these historical processes.

11:30 – 13:00 Panel 5: Copperbelt Society and Culture

Walima Kalusa (Eswatini): 'Educated Girls, Clothes and Christianity: Subverting Mabel Shaw's Sartorial Agenda on the Colonial Zambian Copperbelt, 1925-1955'

This paper takes to task the missionary discourse that projected educated African girls who took to wearing modern clothes on the colonial Zambian Copperbelt after 1925 as relapsed Christians who had reverted to worldliness and sin. Through an exploration of the social and economic forces which shaped the material culture that emerged in the mining area, the paper suggests that there was no contradiction between the sartorial practices of the girls in question and Christianity. To the contrary, this paper argues that educated girls in the Copperbelt turned stylish clothes into an outward expression of their Christian faith, social standing, and respectability.

Sarah van Beurden (Ohio State): 'Monastic Arts and the History of Visual Modernism in the Congolese Copperbelt (1945–1985)'

This paper considers the colonial and postcolonial history of Benedictine art workshops in the development of visual modernism in the Congolese Copperbelt and shows the relevance of the monastery as a cultural space to the artistic economy of the Congolese Copperbelt. The history of visual modernism in the Copperbelt has been written about from the perspective of the work of the students of the art academy of Laurent Moonens, as well as the urban popular painters. I argue in this paper that this neglects a very important and influential strain in the development of modern art in the region, namely the foundational influence of Congolese Christian art. More specifically, the paper will focus on the cultural, artistic, social, and economic histories of the art workshops of the Benedictine monasteries of Kansenia and Notre Dame des Sources in Kiswishi, and the murals and sculptural work by Francois Xavier Goddard (1912-?) Frère Georges Minne and Frère Sylvain Yumba (1933-1985.) What started as an attempt to create 'modern' yet



‘authentic’ Christian Congolese art in the tradition of the Belgian Benedictine art school of Maredsous at the monastery of Kansenia in the 1950s, evolved into a wider-ranging and innovative practice under the guidance of Frère Yumba at the monastery of Kiswishi, where it intersected with the opportunities and demands offered by the trade of ‘tourist’ art (a significant source of income for the monastery,) as well as the development of a striking form of sculpted art in which Yumba’s origin in a family of Luba sculptors became tangible. I will argue that the entanglement of artistic innovation, artisanal art production, Christian art, and tourist souvenir trade we see in the history of Kiswishi, characterizes many sites important to the history of African modernism.

Daniela Waldburger (Vienna): ‘Beer, Cinema, Sports and Women: Notions of Masculinity in the Nostalgic Narratives of Ex-Mine Workers in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo’

This paper discusses the significance of work and leisure in (post)colonial Lubumbashi as it emerges from the narratives of ex-workers of the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK) and its successor, Gécamines. The paper is the result of archival and empirical research focusing on the ex-mineworkers’ nostalgia for a glorious past. In the ex-mineworkers’ narratives, kazi (work) refers to a period when employment stood for prosperity, reflected in material benefits such as housing, food, wages, healthcare provision, education, prestige and, not least, leisure activities. The ex-mineworkers in question are members of the Collectif des ex-agents de la Gécamines “Départs Volontaire”, who all lost their jobs in 2003 in a deal with the World Bank to save the run-down company. They were all born between the 1930s and 1950s, began their careers in the late 1950s to early 1970s and experienced a worker’s life that was characterised by control from birth to death, covering education, housing and controlled leisure activities. Such activities were thus defined by the colonial state and the company, and served primarily as a means of surveillance. However, following a severe and sustained economic decline in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which began before the workers lost their jobs and continued for a long time after, the ex-mineworkers speak of this work life and of the attendant leisure activities with an immense nostalgia for an “object of loss”. This paper examines the narratives of loss of income and the subsequent radical redefinition of leisure – which is also seen as a loss – paying particular attention to the ways in which the ex-mineworkers link these matters to notions of masculinity.

