Introduction

This article addresses the challenges facing researchers seeking to explore the post-colonial history of Zambia, a country whose social infrastructure in general, and academic and research facilities in particular, are in a state of apparently perpetual decline. It describes the major archival resources available and their (significant) limitations. It surveys recent and ongoing attempts to document the history of nationalist movements and leaders. Finally, it explores the potential for developing a history of post-colonial Zambia which escapes the assumptions of a still dominant nationalist historiography, and which thereby contributes to a deeper understanding of the lives actually lived by Zambians since Independence.

The tendency for colonial and post-colonial governments and their advisors to seek to depoliticise issues of power, inequality and control by turning them into ‘technical’ or developmental issues, has been noted by historians and anthropologists. The historiography of post-colonial Zambia is a prime example of the conflation of history with development, creating a discourse that assesses historical change by the achievement of supposedly neutral development goals, and conflates the ideologies and policies of nationalist politicians with those of the nation as a whole. The relatively benign judgements passed by prominent historians of the colonial era in their postscript surveys of the government of Kenneth Kaunda’s United National Independence Party (UNIP) in Zambia’s First Republic (1964-1972) have retained an unwarranted influence, partly because of the dearth of post-colonial historical studies of equal importance conducted during the last 20 years. UNIP’s leading historian, Henry Meebelo, whilst providing valuable insights into the African perspective on decolonisation, played a leading role in establishing nationalism as the unquestioned norm of progressive understanding, axiomatically placing all social forces which came into conflict with it as reactionary and illegitimate.

The disciplines of political science and social anthropology have provided important insights into questions of power and identity in post-colonial Zambia; however, whilst the former focus on limited questions of political power at a state level, the undoubted insights of the latter tend to be restricted in space and time. The specific abilities of historical study to draw together social and political analysis, to address large questions of economic context through the lived experiences of individuals and communities, in the context of the constancy of change, has been sadly lacking in much of the literature on post-colonial Zambia.

The University of Zambia (UNZA)
The decline of UNZA lies at the heart of the failure of Zambian historians to adequately address post-colonial events. Founded in 1965, UNZA was partly funded by public donations, and itself formed a central part of the nation-building developmental initiatives implemented by Kaunda’s UNIP government. In the 1970s, UNZA was one of Africa’s leading universities, providing an intellectual base for academics and liberation movement activists from across the majority of southern Africa still under white minority rule. Divisions in the liberation discourse led in January 1976 to the Government’s first major clash with UNZA students, who criticised UNIP’s refusal to recognise the MPLA government in Angola. Some students and expatriate lecturers were detained, the latter accused of confusing students with foreign ideologies, and the Minister of Education argued that UNZA staff should reflect the aspirations of the nation. UNZA was subsequently closed five more times during UNIP’s period in power, which lasted to 1991; it provided both a significant base for challenging UNIP nationalism, and powerful critiques of social and economic policy. From the 1980s however, falling education expenditure led to an exodus of lecturers to better paid positions in southern Africa and elsewhere, a process that accelerated in the 1990s. Rising fees have deterred many potential students, and those able to attend are often forced to spend most of their time in employment. Increasing financial problems mean most staff now lack access to computers, and there are few new books in the library. Regular power cuts and a frequent lack of running water affect the institution’s dilapidated buildings. Lecturers regularly go for months without pay, having to supplement their income through, for example, the production of school textbooks. UNZA closures are now, if anything, more frequent. In 2003, the academic year did not start as scheduled in January because of a strike by lecturers and other staff demanding pay arrears, and a fear of student unrest led the Government to close the institution in March without a class having been taught.

Given this unpromising context, it is a tribute to the Department of History that a number of staff are still producing primary research. During periods when UNZA is actually open, a weekly history seminar takes place. The focus of such research tends to be on the colonial administration of Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) and its impact in various local

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8 Times of Zambia, 11 February 1976.

9 Professor Bizeck Phiri, a prominent Zambian historian and now Dean of UNZA’s School of Humanities and Social Sciences, has explored this subject in The Crisis of an African University: A Historical Appraisal of the University of Zambia, International Academic Publishers, Colorado Springs (2001).
contexts, or studies of changes in cultural practice. Valuable as of course these studies are, there has been little investigation of the political, economic or social history of Zambia since Independence. No indigenous ‘history of Zambia’ has been produced, and Roberts’ excellent but outdated 1976 study remains the primary text. UNZA’s strongest social science department remains the Institute for Economic and Social Research (INESOR), previously the Institute of African Studies, and (before Independence) the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. It has produced many of the most interesting studies of post-colonial Zambia, but its recent output tends to reflect a development paradigm, recommending or criticising policy and political change accordingly.

The academic assumption that post-Independence events lie largely outside the historical purview reflects popular understanding of post-colonial political change. Many Zambians express the view that Kaunda’s UNIP administration during the multi-party First Republic (1964-1972), and to a lesser extent, the Second Republic one-party state (1972-1990), remained generally popular until the time when it was replaced by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) and a multiparty system in 1991. This is normally explained by the circular argument that, because it survived, it was therefore popular and/or legitimate. Historians and social researchers have not seriously explained the steadily rising economic and social discontent that began in the late 1960s, which lay at the root of the popular basis of the MMD, the most significant political change since Independence. Specific political and social questions which remain to be adequately examined include: studies of minority, regionally-based political parties with significant support (African National Congress in Southern Province, the United Party in Western Province, and the United Progressive Party and its underground successors in Northern and Copperbelt Provinces); South African-supported dissident movements in Western Province and the Zambian State’s military engagement with them; the growth of the state-controlled economy in the 1970s, and the linked growth of the Zambian bourgeoisie, and the militarisation of governance in the 1980s.

The National Archives of Zambia (NAZ)
One of the most significant limits on potential researchers into post-colonial Zambian history is the current condition of the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ). The NAZ has good and relatively well-organised access to Government records for the colonial era, and for the post-colonial First Republic up to 1971. After this however, no files are practically available. Zambia has a legal twenty-year rule, meaning that more than a decade of records that should legally be in the public domain are not. Despite significant efforts over a period of six months to discover why this should be the case, I was never provided with a definitive explanation. Ministries have been allowed to retain files covering this period in their possession, by claiming they were still needed for reference. In theory, such files are available to researchers on request, but no list exists of what they are or the period they cover, so it is virtually impossible to know what might be requested. Hundreds of other files for the period 1972-1983 have been transferred to one of the NAZ’s offices, and subsequently been destroyed, on the basis that they are not important

enough to be kept. Ministry and NAZ officials decide what should be destroyed, but no
criteria for such decisions are publicly available. It remains unclear whether (for
example) 10% or 90% of files from that period have been destroyed, but this will
obviously affect what is available for future researchers. I remain resolved in my efforts
to secure access to some of the surviving files, but it is as yet unclear whether this can be
done.

It seems to be no coincidence that the non-availability of documents coincides with the
introduction of the one-party state in 1972, and the subsequent shift of authority from the
Government ministries to UNIP and the State Presidency. It is known that some
important documents about political parties, UNIP and others, were transferred from the
NAZ to UNIP’s headquarters at Freedom House. UNIP’s own records, which should be
as important a source for the 1970s and 1980s as the NAZ, have also not been made
available. Negotiations have taken place to secure access to these valuable documents,
but current leaders of UNIP, which is now a much diminished opposition party, are aware
of the value of these resources, and appear reluctant to relinquish control over them.

**Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) archives**
The other leading archival resource in Zambia is that of the ZCCM in Ndola, which
brings together the papers of the private mining companies Roan Selection Trust and
Anglo American Corporation that developed and ran Zambia’s strategic copper mining
industry from the 1920s until the 1970s, when partial and then complete nationalisation
took place. ZCCM was established as the overall holding company for these nationalised
assets, and its records are also available. The ZCCM archive thus contains material
providing a valuable insight into economic development, urbanisation, and labour
relations, from the 1930s until the present day (there are no restrictions on availability).
Its staff is helpful and knowledgeable about the holdings, and can locate relevant files
from the catalogued material based on a researcher’s broad subject area.

Zambia’s copper mines have been (re-)privatised in recent years, and the archives are
now administered by the rump state-owned company ZCCM - Investment Holdings. It is
poorly funded, and lacks sufficient staff to process a vast backlog of unarchived records,
which are presently stored at the closed Ndola copper refinery building. The future of the
archives, like that of the privatised mines, is uncertain.

**Trade union records**
A wide range of materials is also held by various non-governmental organisations. The
NAZ project on non-government archives (see below) is seeking to identify and
catalogue such records. My personal experience of working with such institutions has
been with the labour movement, which I found to be helpful and open in allowing access
to the materials they hold.

The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has no recognisable archive, and for
example, no archived minutes of the historical meeting in December 1989 when ZCTU
Chairman General Frederick Chiluba became the first prominent civil society leader to
call for a return to multi-party rule. The ZCTU played a central role in the MMD,
exemplified by Chiluba’s election as Zambia’s President, but the halving of union
membership in the last decade has greatly weakened the Congress, and it lacks the
resources to document its own important role in Zambian history.
The Mineworkers' Union of Zambia (MUZ), based like the ZCTU in the Copperbelt city of Kitwe, is acknowledged to have been one of the most powerful organisations in colonial and post-colonial Zambia. Zambia’s mineworkers played an important role in the nationalist struggle in the 1950s, resisted the takeover by UNI of MUZ in the 1960s and 1970s, and supported the return of multi-party democracy in the 1980s. Despite this, the MUZ head office, Katilungu House, has no organised archive of its records, few of which survive from the colonial period. A major fire in the 1970s destroyed some records. Others, of significant value in my research, were accessed from a filing cabinet only with the aid of a crowbar. Whilst the state of MUZ records certainly reflect the decline of the union in recent years, following privatisation of ZCCM and the consequent halving of the mine labour force, it also suggests the lack of an archival culture amongst such organisations, and the dearth of research being carried out by Zambian academics.

In many of the MUZ branch offices located across the Copperbelt, I was able to locate many of the records I had expected to find at Katilungu House. The extent of branch records was highly uneven, and again is marked by the legacy of social upheaval and economic decline. In Mufulira, no records exist for the period before 1985. This is because, during a major strike that year, mineworkers angered at the position of MUZ burned the branch office to the ground. Whilst this event provided support for my argument that a central point of conflict in the industry has been between the union bureaucracy and its membership, it was not particularly helpful for my research. More prosaically, all paper records in Konkola branch (excepting the last few years) were lost when they were stolen by staff, who then sold them as scrap paper (this has also occurred in the ZCCM archives). The most useful records were at Luanshya branch, where fastidious local officials have preserved records dating back to the 1950s, albeit in an unorganised form. Luanshya MUZ holds copies of the union’s Supreme Council minutes not available elsewhere, and the personal records of individual branch officials provide an insight into the influence of local UNIP officials, and of the administration of labour relations by powerful mine managers. Working through such records is labour intensive and time consuming, but is central to enabling an approach to history that escapes the nationalist orthodoxy that dominates Government records and newspapers. The Luanshya records are now under threat from more current events: the local Roan Antelope mine was privatised in 1997 in dubious circumstances, and closed in 2001. A new investor has been identified and it is hoped the mine will now reopen. However, during my research there (Nov 2002-Jan 2003), Luanshya was (and remains) a town in severe economic depression, with the majority of its population no longer receiving any income. There was a marked atmosphere of discontent and anger that frequently manifested itself in acts of violence. I was periodically advised by the MUZ Organising Secretary to ‘stay away today’, as there was likely to be trouble. In January, a large part of the MUZ branch office in which I was working was gutted by fire during the night (the records were only slightly damaged). MUZ has discussed the centralisation of these records in its head office, but there has been no progress on this to date.

Interviews
Carrying out research in Luanshya was the most practical example of how the present informed understanding of the past during my research, and particularly affected the interviews I carried out with former MUZ branch officials and shop stewards. During the last 20 years, the economic decline of Zambia in general, and of the mining industry in particular, has led to an understandable nostalgia for the 1960s and 1970s, when Zambia was one of the wealthiest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and a trajectory of constant economic development appeared inevitable. Mineworkers tend toward a ‘common sense’ view that in the past, union relations with the UNIP government were good, and that the government supported improvements in their living standards. This view, which reflects much of the existing literature on the subject, was usually expressed in response to general questions at the start of interviews. It was only when asked about specific events, for example the 1966 mine strikes, when mineworkers were accused of treason by national politicians, and local union leaders were detained by the state, that interviewees would recall the extent of Government-union conflict, and express their own anger at state interference in their organisation (frequently contradicting their own earlier statements in the process), and their personal role in resisting it.

Such interview material needs, therefore, to be used carefully. It tends to provide an inaccurate record of dates and other factual information: interviewees asked about an incident in the 1970s would sometimes describe in detail a similar event which took place 20 years later. Archival research carried out in advance provides the researcher with a vital base of such information, enabling her/him to place such events into their rightful context. Used in this way, my interviews have provided important insights into the cultural expression of labour discontent and resistance. The central importance, for example, of the outdoor union branch meeting, or ‘public meeting’ as it is known, was not stressed in any alternative source. For at least forty years, these meetings were attended not only by mineworkers, but also by their families and other local residents. This has decisively shaped the nature of union organisation and the extent of rank-and-file autonomy, and the extent to which MUZ, the power of which undoubtedly rests on its position at the heart of Zambia’s key industry, nevertheless should be understood as much as a social or community organisation as an industrial one. The role of the wives of mineworkers, in particular, although perceptively highlighted by Parpart and Powdermaker in the colonial period, has been subsequently neglected. Wives regularly played a leading role in advancing demands for improved wages and conditions, and in particular in demanding improvements in social services as health and housing provided by the mine companies. They also enforced industrial action by ostracising, morally and sometimes physically, the families of mineworkers who broke strikes. The MUZ provided no forum for these women to organise, and the consistent unwillingness of mine companies to recognise them as a legitimate constituency, led them on a number of occasions to don their husbands’ hardhats and overalls during demonstrations, as they provocatively, and occasionally violently, sought to make themselves visible in the eyes of the company and union. This invisibility is reflected by the contrast between the dearth of written materials on this subject with the regularity with which this theme was repeated in interviews.

13 Parpart, J L, Working-Class Wives and Collective Labour Action on the North Rhodesian Copperbelt 1926-64 (Boston, 1982); Powdermaker, Copper Town.
14 See for example, Times of Zambia, 8 July 1981.
Regrettably, my research was unable to explore this important issue by interviews with miners’ wives themselves. This had not been part of my original research plans, and by the time the importance of the issue became clear, it was not possible to make the substantial adjustments to my programme that a proper analysis of this question would have deserved. Cultural sensitivities mean that an adequate programme of such interviews would, I believe, need to be carried out by a researcher of (probably) local origin and (definitely) a different gender than myself. In contrast, interviews with female MUZ officials were possible, since they took place in the context of their position in the workplace rather than their gender, and provided insights into the prominent role of women workers as local union leaders in recent years. The willingness of a woman MUZ official to be interviewed in her motel room by a white male foreign researcher was suggestive of the extent to which female union activists have successfully pushed aside gender considerations in achieving substantial influence in the labour movement.\(^\text{15}\)

Zambians in general, and the Copperbelt population in particular, are of course no strangers to social research. Lynn Schumaker has explored the achievements and legacy of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI) in her exhaustive recent study.\(^\text{16}\) Schumaker describes the ‘work culture’ of RLI anthropologists and others, and the collaborative approach of Epstein, Mitchell, and other ground-breaking researchers in the 1940s and 50s, with each other and, in particular with their Zambian research assistants. The dissimilarity between this and my own research was striking. I worked individually, not as part of a team and, primarily because translation was not needed in the vast majority of interviews, I did not work with a local researcher; whilst UNZA historians provided invaluable personal support, this did not amount to the formal academic reference point which the RLI once provided. This was compensated for in some respects with the informal support of a wide range of Zambians with whom I freely discussed my research: union branch officials, interviewees themselves, and those I met in social circles. This strengthened my personal sense of the popular understanding of historical events, and the ways in which these shaped the ‘world view’ of respondents. For example, it is widely believed that, in 1990, the UNIP Government killed Jonathan Simakuni, then the MUZ National Chairman (President). This, it is understood, was because he was a powerful and prominent supporter of the then emergent MMD; because MUZ and its members occupied a strategic position in the economy, UNIP could not accept this threat, and had him murdered, probably by poisoning. There is no primary evidence to support this allegation, but the vast majority of respondents were convinced of its truth; some described attending his funeral, and seeing his body in a state that demonstrated the unnatural nature of his death. I first heard this story at a football match in 2001, and it was subsequently and spontaneously repeated in homes, bars and other social settings, as well as interviews, forming as it does part of the everyday discourse of Copperbelt mineworkers. It sometimes forms part of a wider popular belief in a history of political murders, incorporating the deaths of Lawrence Katilungu, first President of the mineworkers union in the 1940s and 1950s, and of Simon Kapwepwe, the former Vice President and leader of the breakaway United Progressive Party (UPP) in the 1970s. Whilst as a historian I am primarily concerned to discover the truth of events, I was convinced that the Simakuni story, whatever its accuracy, is itself important because of

\(^{15}\) Mary Palesi interview, 7 March 2003.

what it tells us about the mineworkers’ understanding of their history. Most miners now remember Simakuni as the outstanding leader of MUZ in the post-colonial era, and believe that, had he survived, he would have continued to fight for their interests, and that they would not be in the parlous situation they find themselves in today. His successors have not been able to significantly resist the retrenchment of more than half of the 50,000 mineworkers, and those still in work have seen a deep decline in their living standards. Simakuni’s memory symbolises an overwhelming nostalgia for a time when mineworkers and their union were a power in the land.

Personal involvement
Lecocq (2002) has raised important questions regarding the physical and emotional impact of fieldwork on researchers, and the need to be aware of, and to accept, the potential influence of this on one’s findings. As indicated above, the context of carrying out research in Luanshya made it impossible to ignore the all too real impact of current events. Waiting around to carry out interviews, I was frequently asked whether I was a representative of a hoped for new investor in the mine. Some interviewees there were unable to feed their families more than once a day, and a few were themselves noticeably weakened by a lack of food. Because of the collapsing economy, there was an almost complete dearth of food available to buy in Luanshya; I became increasingly self-conscious about bringing food with me, and would sometimes eat surreptitiously to avoid being seen by those who could not buy food themselves. I limited reimbursement to interviewees to the cost of necessary travel or a lunch, which led to a few arguments with respondents expecting payment. The experience of carrying out interviews in Luanshya bordered occasionally on the inappropriate, in concentrating on the past when respondents were so concerned about present events. Because of this, I was convinced of the important of producing separate material on the present situation in Luanshya and Zambia as a whole.

About 10% of 64 interviews (usually with older respondents) were carried out in translation, with family members or other miners acting as translators. This was generally successful, but misperceptions sometimes crept in. One miner insisted that he and his fellow workers had always supported the Government, apparently meaning that they had consistently provided political support to the Government. I pursued this question in a number of different forms until, exasperated and confused, the respondent explained that they had always ‘supported’ the Government through the revenue earned by the copper that was the result of their labour, without which the Government would have had no money to spend on developmental projects.

I interviewed two miners who had been tortured by the Zambian police in 1989, when they had participated in activities in support of a return to multi-party democracy. Zambia is generally considered to have seen relatively little violent repression during its period as a one-party state, and this is certainly true in comparison to, for example, Zaire under Mobutu or Kenya under Moi. This does not alter the personal trauma of individuals who have suffered in this way, and as Zambia has had no ‘truth and reconciliation’ experience, there has been little public recognition of such events, and little opportunity for victims to

18 For example, ‘Is this a new era for Zambian trade unions?’, South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 27 No 2 (Johannesburg, April 2003).
express their suffering. The two interviews were contrasting: one miner, who had been fired at the same time as he was tortured, had been reinstated by the President in 1992, and received some respect amongst the local community for this suffering. The other gave the impression that he had talked to no-one outside his family about his experience. Having been tortured to achieve multi-party democracy, in the hope that this would improve the lives of Zambians, he was dismissed from his job as part of a redundancy programme the year after the return of multi-party rule; he has not worked regularly since. He was understandably nervous about recounting his experience, but at the end of the interview was happy to have told his story to an external researcher, appearing satisfied that this represented some belated recognition of his sacrifice. Yet, having had no prior awareness of what I was going to be told, I was left with an uncomfortable sense of inadequacy at being the untrained recipient of his evidently traumatic experience.

More generally, I was interested by the way in which the context in which interviews took place shaped responses. I had no significant problems obtaining interviews; respondents were identified from MUZ records, and by local collective knowledge of important branch officials and shop stewards. Unconsciously following in the footsteps of my RLI predecessors, I avoided contact with the new private owners of the mines, assuming that an association with the companies would tend to make miners wary about speaking openly. Travelling by local minibus and on foot, and using recognisable old-fashioned recording equipment, I sought to reinforce an (not inaccurate) image of a junior researcher rather than a prominent university academic, in the belief that this would enable a freer expression of opinion and perspective.

Interviews took place in a variety of locations, in union offices, some inside the mine plant, and in the houses of miners. Family members, colleagues and friends would come and go. This certainly shaped the nature of some interviews. Roy Yumbe, a prominent local leader at Nkana in the 1970s, now runs a noisy beerhall; we sat outside, and as word spread about the interview, we acquired an audience, with Yumbe’s discourse acquiring an aspect of the public performance he had practised as a local leader addressing open-air meetings twenty years before. Other interviews served as post facto justification for the decisions taken by prominent national officials like Timothy Walamba, widely seen as having betrayed the union by accepting a position on UNIP’s Central Committee in 1988. Some interviewees, like former Nchanga Branch Chairman Maxwell Kalesha, repeatedly sought to demonstrate their enduring authority in front of family members by challenging the relevance of the questions I asked. The lack of control I had over the settings in which interviews took place did not, in my view, negatively affect the validity of the material; respondents spoke freely, expressing criticisms of past and present governments, companies, and unions, and their respective officials.

A new history?
Significant gaps in Zambian historiography are beginning to be filled by two new important initiatives. The Network of Historical Research in Zambia was launched in May 2003, and brings together prominent historians. By providing a forum for research discussion, organising seminars and workshops, and sharing information on funding opportunities, the Network aims to bridge an acknowledged gap in opportunities between Zambian and Western-based researchers. Its planned newsletter aims to revive the spirit of ‘History in Zambia’, previously published by the long inactive Historical Association
of Zambia. Two members of the Network’s Executive have acquired funding from the Finnish Embassy for a survey and collection of Non-Governmental Archives, based at the NAZ. This has catalogued established non-governmental archives throughout Zambia, particularly those of missions. It has approached political parties, particularly UNIP, to explore potential access to their papers. Most significantly, it has persuaded many prominent former politicians to release their private papers to the NAZ. Some of these have prepared autobiographies describing their experiences in nationalist movements and post-colonial government; two of these are to be published in 2004, with funding from the European Union. Given the limited access to surviving Government records and the secretive context of the one-party state, personal files of this sort are already providing a wealth of material for future researchers. By focussing on, and problematising the perspectives and decisions of nationalist politicians and activists, we can begin to properly understand the events in which they were involved.

The survey has received significant local publicity, and this has coincided with a comparative flurry of new publications by important political and economic figures. Simon Zukas was the most prominent white Zambian nationalist activist; he also played an important role in the MMD, and is presently a leading member of an opposition party. Zukas published ‘Into Exile And Back’ early in 2003, which focuses on his role in the nationalist struggle in the 1950s. It provides some insight into post-colonial issues, such as the rivalry between Kaunda and Kapwepwe, the increasing unpopularity of Kaunda, and the emergence of the MMD. These issues tend, however, to be reduced to Zukas’ personal contact with these individuals and organisations, and do not claim to offer a wider analysis of the nationalist and Independence eras.

Andrew Sardanis was a central figure in negotiating the nationalisation of Zambia’s copper mines, and has subsequently been a successful businessman. His ‘Africa: Another Side of the Coin’, which covers his involvement in UNIP, provides a frank analysis of the weaknesses of UNIP nationalism in the colonial era. It is simplistic in its tendency to reduce intra- and inter-party conflict to tribalism, and in its refusal to criticise Kaunda for the faults of the one-party state. Sardanis confirms his efforts to ensure that nationalised companies were run on a commercial basis, but is less than forthcoming regarding the failure of his own businesses, particularly the Meridien Banking group.

Francis Kaunda, former Member of UNIP’s Central Committee, and Chairman and Chief Executive of ZCCM from 1982 to 1991, is similarly amnesiac in ‘Selling the Family Silver’. The book covers Francis Kaunda’s important role in the mine privatisation process in the late 1990s, but much of it reads as a pre-emptive case for his defence, in the context of a rising tide of anti-corruption investigations that have seen former President Chiluba charged with stealing $41m of public funds. Kaunda certainly provides a revealing portrayal of the role of senior MMD Ministers in lobbying on behalf of

20 Information on the Network is available by email: nhrz@zamnet.zm.
21 For information on the survey project, contact Dr Giacomo Macola on gmacola@hotmail.com, or the National Archives, on naz@zamnet.zm.
24 Kaunda, F, Selling the Family Silver: the Zambian Copper Mines Story, Printpak Books (KwaZulu Natal, 2002).
particular prospective mine purchasers, but his failure to criticise Chiluba undermines his claim to offer an honest appraisal of the privatisation process.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, these publications are increasing our knowledge of Zambian history in the second half of the 20th century. It is hoped that Kenneth Kaunda and Frederick Chiluba may one day themselves offer more insightful biographies than the hagiographies so far produced.

**Conclusion**

The unspoken context within which historical research is indeed amongst the most important factors in shaping one’s findings. As Ferguson and Schumaker illustrate, the RLI’s research took place in a period of economic growth, rising expectations of political change, and assumptions of improvement, development, and advancement. Epstein’s ‘Politics in an Urban African Community’\(^{25}\) opens with the following popular Copperbelt song:

*Calo cesu cileya pantanshi*

*Na ‘few Bantu tuleya pantanshi*

Our country is going forward
And we the people, too

In contrast, when bidding goodbye to friends and respondents on the Copperbelt, saying that I would be back next year, I was frequently cautioned that I would find them ‘If we are still here’. The prevailing uncertainty regarding the very future of the Copperbelt as an economically viable urban region is matched with untramelled nostalgia for the time when the copper price was high, and mineworkers displayed their urbanity with pride and the assurance of a better future for their children and their nation. The implicit assumptions of growth and advancement that underlay thirty years of Zambian historiography have now fallen away, and whilst there are now unprecedented opportunities to create a new Zambian history freed from these assumptions, this is in a context of vastly increased poverty, social dislocation, and resulting personal misery. A historian who may in the past have researched in the hope that future generations would appreciate the advances made in the past that enabled them to lead a better life, may now find her/himself recording a form of urban life that is now under threat of disappearing.

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