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# Honest by chance: An investigation into Bemba music in Zambian politics

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## Abstract

This article looks at the influence of Bemba music on politics in Zambia. It covers close to four decades of Bemba music in Zambian politics from pre- and post-independence in 1964 up to 2008. Starting with the Bemba dirge, the article shows how Zambian music in popular (or pop) culture has crisscrossed with music in politics. In order to sharpen the focus of the article, a background to the history of the Bemba people, the Bemba language, and how it has influenced the musical culture of Zambia's Copperbelt is provided. Through Bemba music, the world learns what keeps Zambians together and also that no single language group in Zambia can exist to the exclusion of the others.

**Key words:** Bemba music, Bemba dirge, Frederick Chiluba, Vera Chiluba, Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's Copperbelt, language in Zambia

## Introduction

Music and song have been used extensively in the liberation struggle in Zambia. Two of the dances identified by Matongo (1992) are the Bemba people's *Kalela* and *Mbeni*, which were used discreetly to pass information among African miners on the present day Copperbelt of Zambia.

Previous research into music, song and dance in Zambia, however, has tended to look at this issue from a pop culture point of view. There are a few exceptions; for example, Mwesa Mapoma worked as field worker for Pachart Publishing House in 1972 (Blacking 1973) to record a unique genre called Bemba dirges in which he showcased a wealth of Bemba funeral songs. However, because dirges are usually sung at funerals, they are heard rarely.

The closest the Zambian public has come to sampling Bemba dirges is through the music of the Luapula Jazz Band which sang a tune called *Chabula Nimayo*. In this song, the singers depict a character who narrates how he went to a faraway place and found a little lone dog singing a Bemba dirge in a corridor.

The other example is a song called *Isambwe lyamfwa* sung by the Glorias Band. In this song, the singers criticise distant family members who have a tendency to force themselves into inheriting the property of a deceased relative. The song also gives an exposé of widows who seem in a rush to acquire new surnames as a result of remarrying too quickly.

The Bemba dirges are sung in a contrapuntal style where the leader's lines are echoed by the whole group as women weep inside a funeral house. Such dirges are sung at systematic times, especially at daybreak.

These examples demonstrate that Bemba music does deal with serious subjects apart from pop culture. However, the examples also show how the pop music culture has permeated serious music genres in Zambian music. This article does not claim to present all serious genres of Bemba music. Its aim is rather to sharpen the focus of the research by concentrating on the influence of Bemba songs on Zambian politics. Nevertheless, the lessons to be drawn from the cursory examples given about Bemba dirges are suggestive of how pop music culture fluidly finds itself in political song culture and vice versa.

## Political songs outside Zambia

The power of political songs is evident in much of Africa, particularly in South Africa. For instance, the ruling political party in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) have a rich history of employing song and dance in their ranks, and their meetings are usually punctuated with singing and dancing.

The popularisation of the lyrics of the Zulu language, *Mushini wam, Umshini wam, mshini wam/ Khawuleth'umshini wam* translated as 'My machine, my machine, please bring my machine' by the then ANC President, Jacob Zuma, is the best example, though not without its own ambiguities of probable meanings of the subtext. With the introduction of mobile phone ringtones, *Mushini wam* stormed South African pop culture so forcefully that it became an instant chart hit. In fact it could be argued that pop culture has interlocked with political song culture generally in Africa.

This meshing of pop culture with political song and dance is not idiosyncratic to Africa. In 2008, the star power that United States President Barack Obama drew from American pop icons to influence his election as the first African American president cannot be dismissed as a mere Hollywood show time gig. As the Americans chose change over touted experience, their song, *Yes We Can*, showed how fixated song is on politics across the universe.

Zambia has not been spared as a conjugal site of pop and political song culture. However, there is sparse research documenting this important subject. For Zambia, the problem of documenting music is highly compounded by the fact that the country has been bombarded by music from outside its borders. This is inescapable considering that the country is landlocked. For this reason, a lot of Zambian music is

not copyrighted. However, Chisha Folotiya (2006), a Zambian music producer and founder of Mondo Music Records, reports that the picture is slowly changing. He espouses the epistemological trajectory of music and dance in Zambia. Asked what is meant by renaissance in Zambian music, Folotiya asserts:

[T]here was a massive music industry in Zambia starting from about the late sixties up to about 1990, when it died. We had a record plant here which was part of Teal Records International, which I think was later bought up by EMI. Teal Records stopped producing records around 1990, 91. There were economic reasons. There was a shortage of foreign exchange, so they couldn't buy the acetate for the vinyl to make the records, and two, it was the advent of tapes, cassette tapes. And also, we had no copyright law. So anybody could make anything. So in 1993, 94, when Zambia signed a Copyright Act, then music became protectable by copyright. But during the whole of the nineties, there was no real music going on – until I came along, started Mondo Music, and we actually started investing in musicians, investing in marketing them, in branding them, in putting up systems, distribution to distribute the music across the country and introduce people to the idea of actually buying *Zambian* music (<http://www.afropop.org/multi/interview/ID/102/Chisha+Folotiya-2006/>).

In this reflection, Folotiya dips into the history of Zambian music and links it well with the socio-economic impact. The observation also illustrates the assumed linkage between music, song and dance in Zambia with pop culture spurred by consumerism.

## The Bemba language in Zambian music

The other feature echoed by Folotiya is the central vehicle through which music is carried, namely, language. When asked about his mother tongue, Folotiya states: 'Bemba. That's one of languages from a northern part of Zambia. We're the dominant guys though. People don't like us saying it, but numbers are numbers' (<http://www.afropop.org/multi/interview/ID/102/Chisat+Folotiya-2006/>).

Although Folotiya later gives examples of songs, past and current, sung in Zambian languages other than Bemba, he takes a big risk in asserting that the Bembas are dominant. In the eyes of those who are non-Bemba Zambians, he, like any other Bemba, is being honest by chance. However, this assertion should not be immediately criticised because it does provide an opportunity to examine the linkage between music and the popularity of the Bemba language in Zambia. According to Spitulnik and Kashoki:

The Bemba people in Zambia originated from the Kola region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire), and are an offshoot of the ancient Luba empire. Oral historical accounts differ slightly, but there is general agreement that the Luba immigrants arrived in the high plateau area of north-eastern Zambia (extending from Lake Bangweulu to the Malawi border) sometime during the mid 17th century. This area was already settled by agriculturalists, but by the end of the 18th century the Bemba people had established a powerful kingdom under the central

authority of Chitimukulu, the paramount chief. Bemba rule continued to expand widely throughout north-eastern Zambia up until the end of the 19th century, when the first European missionaries and entrepreneurs began to vie for power in the area. In 1898–89, the British South Africa Company's army wrested control of the Bemba territory, and in 1924 the British colony of Northern Rhodesia was established across the entire region of what is now present-day Zambia. (<http://www.anthropology.emory.edu/FACULTY/ANTDS/Bemba/profile.html>).

This excerpt gives a historical perspective of the origins of the Bemba people who later established themselves as the dominant Zambians to which Folutiya earlier laid claim.

Focusing on Bemba as a language, Spitulnik and Kashoki explain further saying:

Because of the political importance of the Bemba kingdom and the extensive reach of the Bemba language, Bemba was targeted as a major language for the production of religious and educational materials in the early 1900s. The White Fathers missionaries published the earliest written texts on and in Bemba, including the first Bemba grammar in 1907 and the first Bemba translation of the New Testament in 1923 (<http://www.anthropology.emory.edu/FACULTY/ANTDS/Bemba/profile.html>).

How then did the Bemba people find themselves on the Copperbelt, in the Central region and much of Lusaka? Posner (2005) holds that the British colonial government specifically targeted Bemba people from the Northern and Luapula regions to go work on the copper mines. The Bembas were then farther away from the influence of the British South African Company (BSA) down South – that paid more competitive wages to the African people in the southern and western regions. Thus, the Bembas provided cheaper labour for the British colonial government which kept them up north on the Copperbelt and allowed them to go only as far as Kabwe in the most central region of the country. One indirect incentive the British colonial government applied to force Bemba men to seek employment on the Copperbelt was the poll tax that they demanded of all males. To raise the tax, Bemba men had no choice but to earn it through offering their labour on the copper mines. Posner (2005) further argues that the Bemba people themselves found it attractive to move away from their regions because of the poor soils due to heavy rainfalls that discouraged cultivation. Also the areas were infested with tsetse flies preventing these people from becoming cattle farmers.

These various factors meant that the Bembas probably walked long distances from the northern parts before they came into contact with other Zambians in larger numbers than other language groups. With that contact, the Bemba language soon expanded in popularity carrying elements of the other languages with which it came into contact. From the Easterners it borrowed Nyanja aspects, from the Westerners Lozi, from the South Tonga; while Kaonde and Lamba were also incorporated from

North Western and the Copperbelt itself. The language also acquired closer contact with English through the colonialists than perhaps any other Zambian language did.

Through this interaction, the Bemba language then gained recognition as the common language of communication among African mine workers. With that recognition, the language assumed political influence as the language of the liberation struggle.

As the Copperbelt became an important region as a meeting place for the different language groups in Zambia, the first movement that led to the formation of political parties later recognised by the British colonialists was born there.

### **The Bembas in political music after independence and the rise of Kenneth Kaunda**

Upon gaining independence from Great Britain in 1964, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) with Kenneth Kaunda as its President adopted the tune composed by a South African by the name of Enoch Sontonga as the Zambian National Anthem. The tune can be sung in English or any Zambian language. To the present day, the tune remains a national symbol of liberation associated with the immortal voice of the Zambian national hero fondly referred to in Bemba as '*Mposa-mabwe*', which literally means liberation 'stone-thrower'.

Kaunda, himself the son of a missionary migrant father from Malawi, grew up among the Bemba people of Chinsali of Northern Zambia. To the extent that his Shambalakale Farm represents his village, his first language is arguably Bemba.

Marten and Kula (2008) report that the ANC in Zambia, led by Harry Nkumbula, was associated with the Ila and Tonga people of the Southern Province, while the United Progressive Party under former vice-president Kapwepwe was seen as a Bemba party. According to Posner (2005), Kaunda sought to have more or less ethnically balanced governments.

However, once Kaunda had consolidated power, he extended his stand on the political unity of the country. He abolished multi-party politics and instead encouraged a motto of 'One Zambia One Nation' to emphasise the point that Zambia was a solitary state. To neutralise the supremacy of any one language over others, Kaunda decreed that English would be the official language with seven Zambian languages recognised as national official languages. These are Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Kaonde, Lunda and Luvale.

For his part, Kaunda frequently sang in other languages. One particular song which he sang in many African languages is *Tiyende Pamodzi*, which means 'Let us move together':

*Tiyende pamodzi ndim'tima umo* [Let us walk together in one heart]

Chorus: *Tiyende pamodzi ndim'tima umo* [We walk together with one heart]

*Kaunda tiye* [Kaunda let's go]

*Tili pamodzi* [We are together]

*Ndimutima umo* [In one heart]  
*UNIP tiye* [UNIP let's go]  
*Tili pamodzi* [We are together]  
*Ndimutima umo* [In one heart]

Then he would flash his pure white handkerchief and wave it:

*Ico! Ico! Ico!* [There, there, there]  
*Sokona, sokona, sokona* [wave, wave, wave]  
*Ngatawasokone* [If you don't wave]  
*Ninshi uli mwanawandoshi* [you are a child of a witch]

Also at his own pleasure, Kaunda employed a repository of oral traditions by the name of Chitwansombo who sang for him in Bemba on important occasions, such as the opening of Parliament or the times Kaunda held press conferences to communicate reshuffles of his ministers, governors or Central Committee members.

Chitwansombo would swagger in Bemba traditional gear singing:

*Kaunda mulamba, Kaunda ni Kaluunda Kaunda ni Kaonde*  
*Kaunda mu Lenje, Kaunda mu Lozi, Kaunda mutonga, Kaunda mubemba*  
*Kaunda taba namutundu*

This song asserts Kaunda's universality. It says Kaunda is a Lamba, Kaunda is a Kaluunda, Kaunda is Lozi, Kaunda is Tonga, and Kaunda is Bemba. This way the song implies that Kaunda belongs to all the tribes. This strengthened Kaunda's nationalism, but the point remained that Chitwansombo himself communicated this in Bemba. In actual fact, to get to the deeper meaning of what Chitwansombo was propagating, people needed to have access to the Bemba language. Such was Kaunda's popularity that those around him chanted slogans in his praise at public meetings in Bemba:

*Kumulu? Ni Lesa!* [In heaven is God!]  
*Panshi? Kaunda nencito namangwee!* [On earth it is Kaunda, work and money!]

Unbeknown to Kaunda, on a free Saturday, an appreciative Bemba Governor could at his own volition revel with his family:

*Tata Kaunda muweeme!* [Father of the nation Kaunda is indeed wonderful!]  
*Tata Kaunda muweeme!* [Father of the nation, Kaunda is indeed wonderful!]

Kaunda's policies were indeed based on his personal philosophy of humanism. Although this was in line with the reawakening of the day in which to be conscious meant to propound Marxism, Kaunda provided well-funded education where students received free food, books, pens and pencils.

Prior to independence in 1964, Kaunda had promised the Zambian people that they would be eating eggs and that they would never again wear patched clothes, known in Bemba as *ifkamba*, or crudely put, as *amasampwiti*, because of the tendency of tattered clothes to expose the buttocks.



In the late 1970s, Kaunda introduced a concept called Lima or green revolution in which he called on Zambians to go back to the land and grow food. Apparently, he was attempting to reverse the urban migration that had resulted in over-populated towns. Also the copper prices were indicating that the country needed to diversify from too much dependency on mining. The call fell on deaf ears.

In the 1980s, a blind Bemba man by the name of Spokes Chola sang a song called *Salaula*. In it he thanked Zairians for helping Zambians with second-hand clothes called *salaula*, a Bemba term that means ‘to rummage through a pile’. *Salaula* or *Kombo* became handy in Zambia because imports from abroad were highly controlled due to Kaunda’s strict foreign exchange control policies. According to Hansen (2000), Kaunda had run a business selling second-hand clothes before he went into fulltime politics. In a way, Chola was ridiculing Kaunda’s promise to Zambians that they would never again wear tattered clothes as *salaula* were almost the same as tattered clothes.

## The fall of Kenneth Kaunda and the rise of Frederick Chiluba

By the late 1980s, the Zambian economy had plummeted due to the slump in copper prices. Mine workers, students and civil servants alike became disgruntled. Fee-paying schemes were introduced in schools. Although Kaunda had also introduced food coupons for the poor, these could not solve problems in other needy areas. Using the power of the one-party state, Kaunda resorted to repressive tactics. By early 1990, UNIP lieutenants had adopted more aggressive slogans. They now sang:

*UNIP! Mulilo*  
*Uwaikatako Apya*  
*Uwaiketeko! Alipiile*  
*Uukekatako! Akapya*

Ironically the UNIP symbol is a burning flame. But in 1990, Kaunda survived an attempted coup d’état organised by an army lieutenant called Mwamba Luchembe, himself of Bemba origin. Earlier on, Luchembe had been assigned to demobilise the rampaging Great East Road University of Zambia students protesting against Kaunda’s rule. Word had reached the government that students were planning to obtain arms from the American government to wage a war against the Kaunda government. These were mature students who had served their compulsory National Service Military training after completing Form Five. Although the last cohort was the 1980 Form Five school intake, the University monks (male students who did not have girl friends on campus, claiming to dedicate their time to studies), lumpens (disorderly male students who lost themselves in books but sometimes were drunk and skipped lectures), lumpenesses (disorderly female students), mojos (male students who had a girl friend on campus) and momas (female students who had a girl

friend on campus) were ready to be trained militarily by the old students in order to defeat Kaunda once and for all. Running battles with the police and the paramilitaries lasted for two days: some students were shot at, cars were damaged, shops were looted and university property was destroyed.

The University of Zambia Students Union (UNZASU) had been banned a few years before. However, a self-appointed interim committee was at hand to provide leadership, singing:

Viva UNZASU?  
 Viva!  
*Moto, moto* [Fire is lit]  
*Moto wayaka* [Fire is lit]  
*Moto wayaka* [Fire is lit]

Although many of the demonstration songs were in Nyanja, the language used for demonstrations and insulting people at UNZA was Bemba. Protestors could, however, choose between English and Bemba when addressing the forum. Because most ‘lumpens’ were studying in the Natural Sciences, they could only rely on their secondary school English and so they found solace in speaking in Bemba.

However, Kaunda brooked no such unbecoming behaviour. He declared a state of emergency and a curfew was imposed in the country. In spite of an alert imaginary Ruin Police (RUPO), named after the unfinished University of Zambia residence opposite the Bridge Building, the whole university was surrounded in the early hours of July 29 1990. Students were marched to the Goma Lakes where they boarded awaiting buses to ferry them back home. Luchembe was spotted at the Goma Lakes frog-marching students who tried to put up any resistance or were believed to be malingering. He was especially remembered as the red-eyed loutish soldier who amused himself by soaking senior students in what is known in Bemba as *ukunyowesha*.

Soldiers can be unpredictable: barely 12 hours later, Luchembe seized the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation announcing that Kaunda had been toppled. Although the coup did not succeed, Luchembe had demonstrated the discontentment of the army, quite apart from that of the masses, with Kaunda’s failed economic policies and the disintegration of the infrastructure.

Having roundly demonstrated their disaffection with Kaunda, the labour movement, former leaders who had fallen out of Kaunda’s favour, civil society and university students came together to mobilise change for a return to the multiparty politics that Kaunda had banned. This saw the birth of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) with its leader, Frederick Chiluba, himself a Bemba with strong ties with the Labour Movement and the Copperbelt.

To counteract UNIP’s music and fire emblem propaganda, the MMD came up with a clock with a thumb pointing at 12 and the fore finger pointing at one o’clock in what came to be known as ‘The Hour’. Thus, the hour had come for change to remove Kaunda and UNIP from power through the ballot. To encourage voters to

cast votes in favour of the MMD, candidates in the 1991 general elections, masses and political leaders sang in Bemba:

*Biika, biika? Biika!*  
*Biikapo yewe? Biika!*  
*Nipankoloko? Biika*

With tongue in cheek, Chiluba predicted: ‘*Akapuna twapoka!*’ [It is clear I have already withdrawn the stool, referring to the presidential throne].

UNIP was to fight back with a recorded Nyanja song: *Pa 31 October, ti votele Kauunda!* [On 31 October, let’s vote for Kaunda].

Kaunda amused himself by mocking Chiluba’s diminutive height, asking how such a short man could possibly defeat him. Yet, just such a miracle happened on the morning of 4 November 1991. Kaunda was shown live on both TV and radio conceding defeat as the MMD had won by a landslide victory. Kaunda was, however, gracious in conceding defeat. He only questioned why more women did not vote, and he promised to address the matter only after returning from his Shambalakale Farm in Chinsali. The argument was basically academic.

In 1992 and 1993, the value of the national currency, the Kwacha, strengthened, prices of commodities were slashed and most roads were rebuilt. With the voters’ overwhelming support still fresh, Chiluba opened the Zambian economy to the market forces. He set about privatising the mines and state companies. Although most people lost their formal jobs, when the time came for elections in 1996, Chiluba was popular enough to bar Kaunda from standing. Chiluba argued that the new constitution did not allow Kaunda to stand since he had already ruled for over ten years and his parents were not Zambian.

Efforts to advise Chiluba to rescind the decision to allow Kaunda run for office were not effective, even from Nelson Mandela. Chiluba’s popularity still held sway among Zambians and he was well rewarded by the following song during the elections:

*Ku vota tuvotela ba Chiluba* [As for voting]  
*Balitonaula mayo* [We will vote for Chiluba because he has already spoilt us]  
*Ku vota tuvotela ba Chiluba* [We will vote for Chiluba]  
*Balitonaula* [Because he has spoilt us]  
*Nshalale ba mayo* [I won’t rest (sleep)]  
*Nshalale* [I won’t sleep]

*Mukabebe* [Tell them]  
*Mukabebe ee* [Do please tell them]  
*Mukabebe ati balitonaula* [O tell them that Chiluba has spoilt us!]

The use of the word ‘*mayo*’ is varied in Bemba. Whereas the word generally means ‘mother’, it is also commonly used to assure someone. It can also be used as an exclamation when someone has accidentally hurt himself or herself or if someone is

looking for help as in ‘*Mayo nafwa!*’ (Help, I’m dying!). In the song above it both assures and adds an ending to a tune, in which case it is rhetorical.

The concept of ‘Tell them’ in Copperbelt Bemba varied at one time from *mwebe* to *mwebize* and even *mutelize*. It is synonymous with the Nguni language’s *voka*. On the Copperbelt, if someone delivers an important point or *avoka* (they have spoken); it can have several meanings. At the pragmatic level, it shows the authority of the speaker who is able to send someone to deliver the message.

In this case, the people who must be told are either those in the UNIP camp, those across the borders of Zambia, or opposition leaders who entertained any doubts that voters would vote for anyone else apart from Chiluba. The other meaning is drawn from the Bemba youth’s condescending attitude of, ‘I am above bandying words with those who dare think I can vote for someone else apart from Chiluba’.

Nonetheless, even with this arrogance of the voters, other people were not totally happy that Kaunda had been barred from standing for re-election. Attempts to destabilise the country were reported. A few explosions occurred in certain parts of Lusaka Town centre and at the Lusaka International Airport. A group calling itself the Green Mambas was believed to be behind these explosions. Most of those whom were arrested but later released were UNIP activists.

A Bemba song sung in the 1970s was revived to show solidarity and refusal to resort to arms:

*Twakaana twakana* [We refuse, we refuse]  
*Twakana inkondo* [We refuse war]  
*Twakana ubulwi* [We refuse fighting]  
*Twakana twakana twakana* [We refuse, we refuse, we refuse]  
*Fwebena Zambia Twalitemwana* [We Zambians love one another]

This song evoked images of civil wars on the borders of Zambia, such as Angola, Mozambique and Congo DRC. If there is one thing Zambians treasure, it is peace, so when matters reached a point where bombs were reported, naturally the people behind their detonation were denounced. As in all such situations, since no one was convicted, it was hypothesised that such bombs were basically planted by the Chiluba government to win sympathy.

## The fall of Frederick Chiluba

Although Chiluba had succeeded in being re-elected, he had created many enemies. Like Kaunda before him, Chiluba survived a coup attempt by army Captain Stephen Lungu, aka Solo, who was a Nguni aided by a Bemba by the name of Jack Chiti.

Chiluba was swift to arrest his perceived enemies. Among them was Kaunda, whom he accused of being behind the coup. Kaunda was later to go on a hunger strike in the notorious Chimbokaila Prison living only on water and playing his guitar. It took his long-time friend and Pan Africanist, Julius Nyerere to come from Tanzania to persuade him to start eating. Kaunda was later released when donors threatened

to withdraw economic aid to Chiluba. Chiluba continued to enjoy donor aid; largely spending it on building schools and clinics, and repairing roads. However, there was very little investment in the economy though he still enjoyed massive support from the masses.

Insulated by his popularity, Chiluba dared the little devils in his closet. He began to give silent approval of sycophantic calls for his attempt to stand as president for a third term even though the constitution did not allow it. However, the very intelligentsia who had initially supported him so strongly saw through his guise. A silent protest was organised so that every day after closing time at 17:00, motorists would hoot in protest against the Third Term. Chiluba pushed his luck still further. He took the matter to the MMD convention and won as the president of the party. However, tension mounted in the country.

In spite of Chiluba's liberal use of what was later known as slush funding to entice people to push the case for his third term, order was no longer assured in his favour. A diminutive man, pejoratively referred to as Kafupi, and claiming to be of Congolese origin, had just lost a case in which he had challenged Chiluba to prove that the small man (Kafupi) was not his father by undergoing a DNA test. Kafupi insinuated that Chiluba was in fact born as a result of a love affair. As Chiluba's mother had died in labour together with his stillborn twin brother, Chiluba rejected Kafupi's claims. The importance of this case was that if Kafupi should prove that he was Chiluba's real father, then it would follow that Chiluba's parents were not both Zambian – the argument used to bar Kaunda from contesting the Zambian presidency. Chiluba would then have to step down. Although Chiluba refused to submit himself to the DNA test, he lost credibility in many Zambians' eyes.

Also, the initial promise shown by the economy in 1992 and 1993 when prices went down, schools were built and rehabilitated, and roads were tarred was not quite sustained ten years down the line. Despite the opening up of shopping malls driven by South Africans, the masses' buying power did not change enough to give them access to the South African products. Despite improving the private transport system to cater for the public, many people had lost their jobs through the privatisation demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

This lyrical and affable side of Chiluba was not quite alien. At one time he entered into a dancing competition with the late South African diva Brenda Fassie at a rally. Another time, he earned himself the pejorative name, Chanda Beu, likening his dancing voluptuousness to Emoro, the pygmy dancer once used by the Congolese singer and dancer Pepe Kalle (Pareles 1989). The word *beu* comes from the Bemba onomatopoeic phrase *ukubeuka*, which means to tip over because of the style used by both Beu and Emoro where they would tip over suddenly, but not fall. Chiluba was his own man, indeed he frequently referred to himself as a dribbler.

Chiluba might have been his own man, but socially he appeared not to be in full control of his marital affairs. Rumours had started filtering through State House that

the First Lady was fooling around with a young married man. Moses Chitendwe captured the saga:

The dignity and honour of State House in Lusaka, popularly referred to as Plot One, has been eroded amid the suspected dubious activities of President Frederick Chiluba's wife, Vera, who has been involved with two Lusaka businessmen in connection with drug trafficking. Before President Chiluba left for his two weeks official tour of China on 4 October 2000, he ordered his wife to vacate State House for Ndola, on suspicion that she was having a love affair with one of the drug dealers, the key player in the scandal, Archie Mactribouy Malie. It is alleged that on several occasions, Malie was allowed to sneak into State House by Vera's personal security female police officer, and was even served with food there by State House cooks. The leakage of these secret contacts between the First Lady and Malie were so embarrassing to Chiluba, that he had no option but to "invite" his wife to leave State House (<http://lists.peacelink.it/africa/msg00452.html>)

Later, *The Times of Zambia* followed up the story in court after Vera was sued by Malie's wife:

Former first lady, Vera Chiluba was by July last year intimately in love with Lusaka businessman, Archie Mactribouy and she sent him several presents ranging from men's underwear to sexual potency pills. Tungwa Chanda, former wife of Mactribouy, yesterday also recalled how the first lady would order her husband out of bed in the middle of the night to talk about irrelevant issues at the height of the duo's love affair last year (2005).

The report continues:

Ms Chanda said in July last year, her husband convinced her to attend the first lady's birthday party at State Lodge and after the party she had a bitter quarrel and fought him over the erotic manner in which Mrs Chiluba danced with him. 'Believe me or not, the first lady danced like one of Tshala Muana's dancing queens with my husband,' she said (2005).

The Congolese dancer Tshala Muana is well loved in Zambia for her power to attract men (married and single) to her Rumba gigs because of the way she wriggles her body, and throws her dress up at intervals. In recent times she employed a gang of dancing queens who always outperformed Muana's acrobatics. If Chanda likened Vera's dancing prowess to Muana's dancing queens', Chanda was justified in fearing the consequences.

Not that Chiluba himself was beyond reproach: there were counter accusations that Chiluba was also dating a married MMD sweetheart named Regina Chifunda Mwanza. It did not take long before the issue went beyond rumour. Chiluba divorced Vera. Once divorced, the comical Chiluba broke into a typical Bemba social song at a rally where he was campaigning for Mwanawasa:

*Bushimbe nabumpesha amino* [Bachelorhood has confused me]

*Kanshi nganine baufishe* [I wish I was the one they had married]  
*Umwana wabo* [their daughter to]  
*Mayo bushimbe* [O bachelorhood!]  
*Mayo bushimbe* [O bachelorhood!]

Knowing that Vera was likely to be watching him on TV, he was teasing her while blaming Regina's parents, asking why they had not married Regina to him in the first place instead of the man she married. Rather unfair, but understandable considering that Chiluba had just been reminded by Kafupi's demands that he might possibly be a love child. If Kafupi's claim was true, then fate had been unfair to Chiluba by letting Vera be unfaithful to him in the same way his mother was alleged to have been unfaithful to his supposed real father. Chiluba once again needed to survive.

Canadian-born poet Dorothy Livesay (1967) who lived in Zambia from 1957 to 1962 captured Zambia's propensity for masculine sexuality way before Zambia's independence. In her poem, *The Wedding*, she describes this black male power in terms of the sexual power of music:

The hand that does the drumming  
 drums man home  
 to womb and woman  
 beats that rhythm  
 on black curving thighs  
 thrusts love upwards.

In analysing Livesay's poetry, Rauwerda picks the issue up well saying: 'This wedding of sexuality and music results in what Livesay implies is not only sexual, but also political power: it, as Livesay writes, "moves the world"' (1998: 44). What Rauwerda says here is intriguing. What she misses out, however, is linking sexuality and music in political power further to self-destruction. It is also quite generous of Rauwerda to restate the point that the concept of sexual power is universal and therefore not just idiosyncratic to Africa and Zambia in particular. At about that time, the then American president, Bill Clinton, was caught up in a sex scandal with a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. Clinton had also argued that he took a pull of dagga but did not swallow it. Although this was generally accepted as a harmless lie, his sexual involvement with the intern was enough to earn him an impeachment which proves the theory that self-destruction comes from sexual cheating. To this end, Clinton falls in the category of presidents, who, like Chiluba can only be honest by chance.

That is why even in Chiluba's case, the logical thing for him to do was to punish Kafupi by rejecting him. He punished Vera by letting her be sued by Mactribuoy's wife, and Mactribuoy by throwing him into prison. Chiluba's self-destruction, however, emanated from his punishing Regina's husband by grabbing Regina. Although it has been said that Regina's husband was paid off as is the custom in Zambia if one grabs another man's wife, the injustice done was too much to be forgiven.

Was Chiluba surfeited? Such a contradiction was bound to lead to Chiluba's self-destruction.

Returning to Livesay (1967), it should be realised that Livesay had actually foreseen this conflict in Zambia. However, the linkage that Rauwerda (1998) makes between music, sex and political power is more important. If it were possible to go back to the Garden of Eden, human destruction would be shown packaged in the form of a snake that tricks the woman into eating from the forbidden tree. Whatever happens later between Adam and Eve is immaterial. What is rather striking is the linkage between the snake and destruction. If the shape of the snake can be perceived as not just a Freudian conjecture of libido, it is possible to see a link between the shape of the snake and the dance Tunga Chanda notices in Vera Chiluba as she and Chanda's husband dance to their destruction.

Conveniently, it could also point to Chiluba's selfishness in being responsible for the destruction that befalls these unquiet beds. However, Chiluba is a survivor. In the same way that Chiluba survived at birth where both his mother and twin brother died, Chiluba has to emerge as a solitary reaper with Regina. In this oedipal complex syndrome, all men must pay a higher price as women are being loved but rejected if they dare compete. The concept again becomes universalised here by Chiluba when compared with Bill Clinton's actions when he denied Lewinsky's accusations for his own survival. So what is seen here transcends cultural and racial boundaries. It may be called male chauvinism, but it is not unique to Chiluba, Zambia or indeed Africa.

## **Michael Chilufya Sata unbound**

Like Satan was once a chief dancer in heaven singing praises to God, Sata, a Bemba originally from Chief Chitulika, was once Chiluba's right-hand man present at major MMD rallies that drummed up support for party lines. Prior to 1991, Sata had served in different portfolios in Kaunda's UNIP government. One of the notable positions he is remembered for was serving as Lusaka District Governor. In this portfolio, Sata spearheaded several Council projects, notably transport and housing. He dumped Kaunda just at the right time and became a founder member of the MMD. While in the MMD, Sata showcased his uncompromising skills for development projects and earned the nick name 'King Cobra'. Sata worked closely with Chiluba, supporting him fully even in his Third Term attempt, but quietly hopeful that Chiluba would pick him as the next president.

A conglomerate of factors forced Chiluba to let go of the idea of standing for a third term. However, Chiluba did not pick Sata to succeed him, but phoned Mwanawasa at midnight to tell him he was to stand as the next president under the MMD. Mwanawasa had resigned as Vice President citing the alarming levels of corruption in the Chiluba-led government.



The choice of Mwanawasa angered Sata and led him to break away from the MMD and form his own party, called the Patriotic Front to compete against Mwanawasa in the 2001 election. Chiluba stuck to his guns and campaigned for Mwanawasa. In 2001, the battle for political power that ensued pitted Mwanawasa against Sata, Godfrey Miyanda, Tilyenji Kaunda, Anderson Mazoka and Christon Tembo among other contenders. The campaign songs exposed Mwanawasa as a cabbage referring to the fact that Mwanawasa's health was poor following a road accident he survived while he was the country's Vice President (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). Sata participated in this election as a dark horse considering that he did not have enough time to sell himself well to the electorate.

### Copperbelt reloaded

Once Mwanawasa was elected, Chiluba quickly married the sweetheart denied him all these years. But later it was the divorcée Vera who would trigger Mwanawasa to institute court charges against Chiluba. She claimed that Chiluba had stashed billions of Kwacha in foreign bank accounts and she also wanted to benefit from the money as they had earned it together.

Regina would be sued later by the state for receiving gifts allegedly bought with money stolen by Chiluba while she was his mistress. However, Regina wished to warn her accusers that she was tough. At one point during her many arrests, Regina hit back as reported in *Maravi*:

You tell Max Nkole (Task Force chairman) that he must tell me what sort of jail sentence he wants me to serve. I am not scared of jail sentence, I was born in Lubuto a compound in Ndola, I can't fear Mwanawasa's jail. (Breaking into Bemba: *Bushe elyo naupilwe kuli ba Chiluba, lisambi? Mwembwamwe!* [You dogs, is it a sin for me to have married Chiluba? Am I the only one who got married to Chiluba and has property?]) Regina yelled at the Task Force officers (September 2007).

Here again, the 'You Tell' concept comes out clearly. However, in this excerpt Regina gives Zambians a preview of what it was like to be born in a compound on the Copperbelt of Ndola's Lubuto. Lubuto Compound itself is situated behind a looming hill separating it from a more capricious shanty town called Kantolomba where a huge cemetery lies. Up north are huge dumping sites known in Copperbelt Bemba as 'Marabo', which is a corruption of the old Marabastad in Pretoria, South Africa, as mirrored in Mphahlele (1959)'s novel, *Down Second Avenue*. There youths played as urchins, scavenging for what was left each time a supermarket got burnt when Zambia was Zambia, doing well economically.

Chiluba drew a lot of pleasure from associating himself with the Copperbelt. For instance, in the 1996 election when Dean Mungomba, President of ZADECO stood against him, he was able to dismiss Mungomba in Bemba: '*Ba ZADECO bacepa, teti*

*batukwanishe ifwe tuli bena Ndola* (ZADECO party is too small, I am too sophisticated for them – I am a Ndola dweller).

There are several versions of the Copperbelt language, including the ‘noise’ Owen Sichone (2001) accuses Ferguson (1999) of having imagined because Ferguson was unable to understand Bemba:

Zambians are not monolingual, nor do they have to fit into the neat categories that the researcher needs to think with, in order to turn noise into signal. Whether one is rural or urban, localist or cosmopolitan, one is always creating meaning. This involves the endoginisation of foreign culture and the modification of existing order. That is why Zambian English, or Catholicism, football, rock music or the family are different from the ideal types (2001: 377).

Sichone continues:

Should one conclude, on the basis of busy roads, night-clubs or bars, that cities are ‘noisy’? Noise is what you get when you don’t understand sound, and it is only when one does anthropology at home that one can understand that noise is everywhere. Despite the claim that translators can attain cultural fluency, Ferguson has shown that much of what they hear is noise. What they are fluent in is their own culture, one part of which involves how to translate other people into ethnographies. Should anthropologists write with such authority after such a brief encounter with an arbitrary array of informants? (2001: 377).

Sichone could never be wrong: he could be taking chances by claiming to have omniscient knowledge of the Copperbelt. Although this may be atypical of the whole field of anthropology, caution is certainly well advised when defending the Copperbelt. For instance, quite apart from the noise that has to be ignored, there is also the understanding that youths who have grown up on the Copperbelt have smoked dagga. If Sichone chooses to dismiss such a belief too quickly, he would be doing so at his own peril. There are in fact two things here: growing up on the Copperbelt and working on the Copperbelt in adult life, each of which has its own infrared camera image of the Copperbelt. Sichone may reject Ferguson’s impressions of the Copperbelt too easily, but neither of them seems to talk about why the green plants called ‘*ulunsonga*’ are fancied as fences on the Copperbelt compounds such as Lubuto or Twapya, Kwacha, Buchi or Ndeke. It is only people like Regina Chiluba who can tell the different uses of ‘*ulunsonga*’ quite apart from using its latex to catch birds, which should be a familiar turf for Sichone if he played as a young boy on the Copperbelt.

What Sichone could do is to take an anthropological interest in Ferguson’s Western traditions and write about them from the eyes of a Zambian. This is important because, as Kashoki (1978) pointed out earlier, the Western researcher has not reciprocated the gesture he has enjoyed in researching the African turf.

For now, the little information that is beginning to come through to Africa appears to raise more questions than answers about who was responsible for the destruction Africa is suffering from in modern times. For example, in her poetry, Livesay

has revealed this kind of ambivalence during the time she lived in Zambia. In *The Second Language* she shows her awareness of the presence of dagga although it is not quite clear if she just watches the Zambians smoke dagga or in fact she takes part in trafficking it to Zambia if not consuming it. Livesay writes:

Then who shall blame the dagga smoker?  
 the madman who escapes in terror?  
 the drummer beating out his warning?  
 I also, also you  
 enter into league with these:  
 by you and me  
 (who dare not speak)  
 are such deeds done . . . (1967: 260).

Again the music is evident in the lines above. But what is even more prophetic about Livesay's poem in relation to Chiluba is that one of his ministers had actually claimed that Chiluba used to smoke dagga when he was Zambia's president (Dennis and Snyder, 1998). Nevertheless, considering that Clinton also admitted attempting to take a pull of dagga, the issue of consuming dagga among political leaders becomes universal and therefore this is probably a sin Chiluba should least repent if the Minister's claims are true.

In the case of Regina Chiluba, she does not discuss a possibility that she, like Livesay, had the courage to 'enter into league with these' but to show how she had seen through Mwanawasa's guise; Regina must draw on the Copperbelt Bemba culture referring to government security officers as dogs. This is part of the Copperbelt repertoire; just as a person is expected to walk in a Copperbelt-like manner with a particular step known as 'Timing' when you are on the Copperbelt.

There is, however, evidently a brighter side to the Copperbelt. With the sporting facilities funded by the then Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM), the Copperbelt has been the foundry where excellent Zambian footballers have been groomed.

For his part, although Mwanawasa was also a product of the notorious Chiwala Boys Secondary School in Ndola, he was able to support Vera. He appointed her to the post of Tourism Deputy Minister although her education background was unknown (Musonda 2007). He was also kind enough to release Archie Mactribuoy from prison. But to the extent that Mwanawasa was just another sly Ndola apostle who had befriended Vera to get inside information about Chiluba, he was merely being honest by chance. So, given this slippery nature of the Copperbelt people, perhaps the best approach to adopt is to be modest and say that the Copperbelt is too sophisticated to be vouched for.

## Mwanawasa's legacy

Mwanawasa's ascendancy to power in 2001 was not totally plain sailing. Anglo-America, which seemed to back the candidature of Anderson Mazoka, decided to pull out of running the mines, thus reducing revenue from the copper royalties substantially. It took time for Mwanawasa to recover from this blow. The situation was only normalised when Chinese investors offered to buy the mines.

However, the years during which Mwanawasa led Zambia appear to represent a point of stagnation in post one-party state Zambia. Although Mwanawasa continued to allow the opening of more shopping malls owned by South African businessmen and copper mines, not much was done to spearhead citizens' empowerment in the country. Hospitals were poorly managed and resourced. He and other famous politicians, including opposition leaders, were flown to South African hospitals for treatment when they fell ill. The standards of education fell terribly as the two universities were closed because they were poorly funded. Mwanawasa himself merely pledged to renovate the room he had resided in as a teenager at the University of Zambia. Where Chiluba had at least built houses in Lusaka under the Presidential Housing Initiative (PHI), Mwanawasa appeared to have no urban planning policy with the result that individuals went about building their own houses in dusty areas without street names. The cost of food and housing generally skyrocketed. Mwanawasa concentrated on exposing graft in the previous Chiluba government. Chiluba was issued with numerous charges of plundering national resources, together with some of his lieutenants, most of whom were Bemba speakers. In no time he had earned himself the title of 'plunderer'. Mwanawasa requested a London court to try Chiluba, although Chiluba rejected the idea of being tried by a British court which had no jurisdiction over Zambia. Chiluba was pronounced guilty by the British court, but he refused to recognise the verdict.

In 2006, Chiluba shifted camp from the MMD to Sata's PF following a barrage of court summonses by the state accusing him of having looted Zambia's resources while he was in power. Sata welcomed Chiluba and promised that he would drop the charges against Chiluba if he won. Sata argued that Mwanawasa was practising selective justice in which he targeted Bembas for punishment.

In a show of Bemba popularity, a political song was written that opposed the MMD clock the people had loved so dearly. Sung in Bemba the song was played in buses, on private radio stations and transmitted across continents:

*Inkoloko balelaanda* [The watch they are talking about]

*Yalifwa akale* [Died a long time ago]

*Nangu tabaletweeba* [Although they are not telling us]

*Baleti tatwaishiba* [They think we don't know]

*Umulandu wama ba mpuu* [Because of bumps]

*Yaisa yapoona* [It fell off]

*Yawila mumenshi* [It fell in water]

*Yaleeka no kubomba* [It even stopped working]  
*Ibikeni mu bwato* [Put it in the boat]  
*Tuleya kwishilya* [So that we go to the other shore]  
*Sata umwine ewishibe* [Only Sata knows]  
*Aleeya alungishe* [He will go and repair it]

Chorus:

*Pantu ifwe twakana* [Because we have refused]  
*Ifwe twakana* [We have refused]  
*Ifwe twakana* [We have refused]  
*Ifwe twakana* [We have refused]  
*Ukufwala inkoloko iyafwa* [To wear a dead watch]  
*Ifwe twakana* [We refuse]  
*Ukubomba nenkoloko iyafwa* [To work with a dead watch]  
*Ababomfi balebomba* [Workers are just working]  
*Ukwabulenshita* [Without keeping time]  
*Lyonse balolelafye* [They just wait endlessly]  
*Nganilisa bakenuka* [When they will knock off]  
*Ico icikoloko icafwa* [That terrible clock that is dead]  
*Ekwali makenica* [There is a mechanic]  
*Sata fye eka ewingalungisha* [Only Sata can fix it]  
*Tiyeni mu bwato bonse* [Let's go in the boat all of us]  
*Tutwale icikoloko icafwa* [Let's take the terribly dead clock]  
*Sata uli kwisa cilungishe* [Where are you Sata? Fix it!]

Chorus:

Vote Patriotic Front, Vote Maiko Sata fo mo jobs, beta auses, beta schools and beta elth

Vote Maiko Sata on 28 September tu sauthand and six

[Vote Patriotic Front, Vote Michael Sata for more jobs, better houses, better schools and better health. Vote Michael Sata on 28 September 2006]

This is an example of Bemba subtlety: if the clock is taken to represent the MMD government that had not delivered, it would be kinder. The dead wrist watch could also imply the lethargic nature of Mwanawasa's character. Linked with the fact that Mwanawasa was viewed as a 'cabbage', people believed that only Sata could fix the economy.

Among the issues Sata heavily criticised Mwanawasa over was the question of selling the mines to Chinese investors. The Chinese investors did not make matters easier for themselves either. Their concern for workers' safety and rights was brought into sharp focus when numerous Zambian mine workers perished on one of the mines following a fatal explosion from poorly attended explosives. Larmer and Fraser report on Sata's discourses with the Chinese investors as follows:

Whilst most politicians ignored these concerns, they became a central part of Sata's discourse. Three weeks before the election, Sata raised the issues of BGRIMM, safety

in the mines, low wages, and late payment of wages by Chinese-owned companies. He also criticized the allocation of government-built markets to Chinese traders. Lusaka's Kamwala market, for example, has been leased to Chinese management for 65 years, bringing local traders into competition with Chinese counterparts (2007: 628).

Also, the Chinese investors had signed contracts with the government excluding workers' social welfare. Considering that the Copperbelt was the hub of Zambian football, reducing the funding for sport clubs did not sit well with the Copperbelt miners. Therefore, Sata's open criticism of the Chinese investors made a lot of sense to the Copperbelt voters.

Either the Mwanawasa leadership was overwhelmed with the problems it found itself lumbered with or it was just indifferent to them. Some of these concerns are highlighted in the following Bemba song:

Mwemakufi (You knees!)  
 Zambia National Anthem tune  
*Mwe Lesa wandi ngafweniko* [God help me]  
*Ubucushi insala necipowe* [Poverty, hunger and starvation]  
*Fyaisula icalo cesu konse uko ungaya* [Have filled our country wherever you can go]  
*Amalanda nokulishanya* [Suffering and dissatisfaction]  
*Ubupina no kubulilwa* [Poverty and squalor]  
*Filepongoboka ngefula pabulaya* [Gush out like stormy rain]  
*Amatontokanyo yalilembwa* [Thoughts have been written]  
*Pafinso fyaba kalamba* [On old people's faces]  
*Imisepela, abaice, nefiteekwa* [Youths, babies and domestic animals]

Chorus:

*Mwemakufi yandi, mwinenuka*, [My knees don't give up]  
*We mutima wandi nobe salapuka* [My heart, you wake up]  
*Fibandanshi ne mipashi yakowela* [Devils and evil spirits]  
*teti ficimfye Lesa wa mweo* [Cannot overpower the Living God]  
  
*Imimana masabi fyaba mbwee* [Rivers, lakes and fishes are plenty]  
*Umufundo ponse wanyanta* [Our soils are fertile wherever you step]  
*Imiti, nama nempanga umutatakuya* [We have trees, animals and good vegetation endlessly]  
*Amabwe nayo mintapendwa* [We have numerous precious stones]  
*Nababomfi libumba* [Workers are plenty]  
*Lelo ubunonshi bwabafye pamapepala* [Yet wealth only remains on paper]  
*Infula kwena ilaloka* [It does rain]  
*umutende twimbapofye pefye pefye* [We are extremely peaceful]  
*Lelo tushalapo fye necisungu mukanwa* [Strangely we are just left with English in our mouths (We seem to be only good at speaking English)]

Chorus:

*Ukupepa kwena tulapepa* [If it is praying, we do pray]

*No kufunga nipamushi* [We also fast]

*Amasambililo nayo ni lekaleka* [If it is education we have needed, we are extremely educated]

*Ukubomba nako tulabomba* [If it is working hard]

*Nga basha nabakabalwe ulucelo akasuba elyo no bushiku* [We work as hard as slaves and donkeys, night and day]

*Bushe ninkanda yafita* [Is it because we have a black skin]

*Nangula mano yacepa* [or we do not have enough brains]

*Nacucutika mwe tata njebeniko* [I have suffered please God tell me]

Chorus:

The song appears to be a mono-dialogue or soliloquy of the singer with God in the guise of a kneeling worshipper, characteristic of the Catholic Way of the Cross where the devoted kneel for hours on end. However, the singer probably has a ‘Born Again Christian’ orientation since Catholic Bembas do not refer to God with a prefix of respect as ‘*Mwe Lesa*’. A Catholic would say ‘*We Lesa wandi*’ (My God) or simply ‘*Lesa*’ (God).

This song summarises the power of the Bemba language not just as a political tool to let candidates rule the country. It demonstrates how the Bemba language can be an effective means of speaking out as a voice of the powerless when things go wrong in the state, just as it was used in coding and decoding information among Zambians during the freedom struggle. The singer draws on the profundity of the Bemba language here by using a cluster of synonyms. For instance, ‘*Ubucushi, insala, necipowe*’ (poverty, hunger and starvation) do not just lay emphasis on the poor human condition; they compel the listener to stop and think. The other point is that the singer uses deep Bemba as opposed to surface youth Bemba. A word like ‘*ukufunga*’ may mean ‘to close’ for a Bemba speaker who picked the language up from the streets. The context here, however, requires it to mean ‘religious fasting’. The singer uses deep Bemba to show the seriousness of the matter: if thoughts can be *written* on the faces of old people, babies, youths and domestic animals, a person would be foolhardy to dismiss what is going on here.

The singer appeals to his knees: ‘My knees don’t give up!’ What becomes even more dangerous is the singer’s use of the word ‘*ukunenuka*’, which actually means losing faith as opposed to mere giving up. This is reinforced by the following line: ‘*We mutima wandi nobe salapuka*’ (My heart, you wake up). Here the singer and his heart are separated, persuading his heart to crank him into action. If the heart should wake up, the singer would be compelled to take up arms against this sea of troubles. But the singer, now fired up by his heart, ends up sinning: ‘*Bushe ninkanda yafita nangula mano yacepa*’ (Is it because we have a black skin or we do not have enough brains?) he asks. Such a sin is, however, understandable: it is similar to the one committed by the man who attempts to sue God after learning that the calamity that

befalls him is an act of God. The whole complaint becomes harmless because the singer appeals to God showing that he still has faith in God.

Is this a political song? If so, is it directed at the government of the day? The answer to the first question might certainly be in the affirmative considering that the song commences in the tune of the Zambian National Anthem. The answer to the second question becomes affirmative only when the government of the day becomes guilty. Also the timing of the song might have forced the government of the day to react to it: Sata was just propagating a re-awakening in the country. Bemba songs were used during independence struggle; is this Bemba song honest by mere chance now? The song was banned in Zambia under the leadership of Mwanawasa.

Mwanawasa still won, notwithstanding, beating Sata in an election which analysts have argued was actually won by Sata because most of the working class in all urban areas voted for Sata (see Larmer and Fraser 2007). In essence, the Bembas had overwhelmingly voted against Mwanawasa whom Chiluba had given them and for whom they had voted so overwhelmingly in 2001.

Larmer and Fraser (2007) give their views on why Mwanawasa may have won, but the researchers miss a subtext to the politics of Zambia by not tracing the Bemba factor carefully. What they do not see is that Mwanawasa won because non-Bemba speaking regions that did not field a candidate voted for Mwanawasa and not Sata.

Mwanawasa died on 19 August 2008, in a Paris hospital. His legacy remains to be written about by scholars. The pattern of voting that was witnessed in 2006 was later repeated in the 2008 elections when Sata lost to Rupiah Banda, a Nguni-speaking man from the Eastern Province of Zambia who had been Mwanawasa's Vice President.

After the death of Mwanawasa, some Zambians believed that he had left a legacy. Although Banda's campaign was based on continuing Mwanawasa's legacy, a probable indication that he never had his own plan to rule Zambia up to 2011, refereed literature clearly documenting this legacy was not available at the time of printing. Some say he improved the national treasury and fought corruption. Critics argue that the improvement of the treasury was a demonstration that Mwanawasa never spent resources on any development project, making his story compare well with the biblical story of the talents in which a master gave money to his servant to multiply. Instead of multiplying the money, the servant hid it in a hole in fear of the master only to return it without a profit.

As far as fighting corruption, Mwanawasa was caught up in a catch 22 situation when the civil service was found to have plundered national resources during his rule. As for the prosecution of Chiluba and his wife Regina, Mwanawasa appeared less convincing by suing Regina over a television set purported to have been given her by Chiluba bought with stolen money. What was strange was that the person who received the present was to be found guilty before the thief was convicted. However, these technicalities were all justified since Mwanawasa was himself a lawyer.



A lesson to be drawn from Sata's two losses is that dominant language groups, like the Bembas, can only win in regional politics like Zambia's either through a coalition with other regions or by encouraging all regions to field presidential candidates. The fragmentation would then aid the dominant group. Otherwise, there remains no guarantee that the Bembas can rule by numbers. All language regions necessarily have to love one another. They can only despise one another at their own peril. Such a lesson should enlighten the group of educated Lozis, with a professor among them, who declared that it was the Lozis' turn to rule Zambia and the country should give them a chance to rule (*Maravi*, June 2007). Although it was not clear whether they believed the government was responsible for appointing a president, there may be many lessons to be learnt from Sata's losses if they meant to use the ballot.

One other way of resolving the anxieties expressed by the learned colleagues from Western Province is to make a submission so that the constitution can be changed to allow for presidents to rotate language region by language region. Such a proposal could be useful if the question of what a president is expected to do for Zambia were elaborated. If the president intends to make the people from his or her region happy that a person from their region is governing, the policy is of little use. If, however, the aim is to show that some language regions would distribute resources across the country more equitably than others, the experiment would be useful to try on condition that clearly stated deliverables and time lines are given to the president. If the intention is to gain access to the national resources in order to develop the language region from which the president comes, the proposal should be rejected by all progressive Zambians.

The beauty of limiting the president's term of office is that presidents from more language regions will have an opportunity to lead Zambia. The legacies they leave will help to lessen the tensions surrounding ethnic politics in Zambia. Such an experience will also help to debunk the various myths spun about some language regions. Unless this happens, the belief that certain language regions can only be honest by chance will persist.

The late Zambian musician, Keith Mulevu, cautioned Zambians against their lack of patriotism in his song:

*Ubuntungwa twalipoka* [Independence we have obtained]  
*Mucalo cesu ica Zambia* [In our country, Zambia]  
*Nomba iwe mune we mwina Zambia* [But now you Zambian friend]  
*Wishitisha calo* [Do not sell the country]  
*kuli aba bamwisa* [To these foreigners]

Mulevu sang in Bemba even though he was not Bemba himself. His words should inspire anybody who aspires to political office in Zambia to have a catholic approach to development, that is, to reject parochialism.

## Conclusion

This article has looked at the influence of Bemba songs and music on politics in Zambia. There are probably a lot of lessons for the Bembas. These lessons could be extrapolated by the non-Bemba speaking peoples of Zambia. They could be good lessons for Zambia's neighbours too. Through Bemba music, the article has shown that political change is inevitable and that Kaunda was gracious to accept defeat. The article also showed that change has taken place in Zambia; that some problems were solved after political change; that the solutions have not been effective enough; that change takes time and that where there is a will, there is a way. Such a way, however, needs to be sought. Whether what happened to both Chiluba and Mwanawasa can happen to any other president is a question that can only be posed. Considering the complexity of the Bemba language and culture on the Copperbelt, anybody who would claim total knowledge of the Copperbelt people and way of life would be taking a chance.

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