

PRE-COLONIAL TRADE IN ZAMBIA.

by

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This essay is intended to give some idea of the long history of trade and industry in Zambia before it came under British rule in the 1890's.¹ Various useful studies have already been made in this field. Gluckman's first paper on the Lozi examined the trade organized around their flood plain. Gann's first paper placed the end of the slave trade in Zambia in the context of local, economic as well as political structures. Miracle has drawn attention to the vitality of pre-colonial trade among the plateau Tonga, Senga and Nsenga. Vansina has outlined the complex patterns of Central African trade routes, and some of these patterns have recently been investigated by other historians in considerable detail.² Furthermore, the archaeologists who have excavated Iron Age sites in Zambia have been very much alert to the possibilities of reconstructing the economic history of periods beyond the reach of oral traditions and documents. Indeed, it is the great contribution made by archaeologists over the past ten years or so to our knowledge of Zambia during the past two millennia which prompts the present attempt at a general survey of Zambia's economic history since the early Iron Age."

This survey is necessarily uneven and impressionistic. It is based mainly on archaeological evidence for southern Zambia, up to about A.D. 1500, and on literary records for various parts of the country since the mid-eighteenth century. I have gone into some detail. The story of Lozi and Kololo involvement in coastal trade seems worth retelling as previous accounts are rather sketchy; but I am not much concerned with the relatively well known activities of traders from East and South Africa. My aim is, rather, to show how far we may discern a growth and expansion of trade within what is now Zambia over the past two millennia, and to indicate the possibilities for further research. Much may still be gleaned from literary sources. And though Zambia's pre-colonial political history is now being written from oral sources as well, these have too seldom been exploited for the purpose of writing economic history. To some extent, indeed it is already too late to do this, since the patterns of pre-colonial trade and industry have been almost completely disrupted by modern economic changes. And few people

But this makes it all the more necessary to seek out such people without delay, so that their knowledge can improve our understanding of African economic history.³ Besides, the very process of disruption, of transition to a cash economy and universal access to mass-produced imports, urgently needs study. Disruption, indeed, may be too sweeping a word. Some years ago White noted the relative ease with which the Luvale had adjusted to the cash economy of the colonial period, and he argued that this was due to their comparatively prosperous local economy and experience of long-distance trade.⁴ The political continuities from pre-colonial to colonial Africa have in recent years received considerable attention, but there is need for a similar focus on economic continuities, and for such work oral information should prove of great value.⁵

① One very general point is perhaps worth making at the outset. 'Trade', in this essay, refers to the whole field of economic exchanges transacted in pre-colonial Zambia. Some historians of Africa, and even some anthropologists, have tended to imply that 'trade' began only with the export of gold, ivory or slaves. This, of course, is nonsense. Such exports were only the most glamorous and horrific results of a long process of economic interaction between African societies, as well as between Africa and the outside world. For most people in Zambia, as elsewhere, the important items of trade were local products of everyday necessity-iron (for tools and weapons), salt, grain, dried fish, cloth, pottery, woodwork, tobacco or personal adornment (cosmetics; iron and copper wire for bangles and bracelets). It is becoming increasingly, if belatedly, clear that indigenous trade of this kind underpinned the exchange of African products-whether ivory, slaves, gold, palm oil or beeswax-for overseas manufactures.⁶ The patterns of local trade and industry shaped and sustained the trade routes between the interior and the coast. Conversely, the development of coastal trade stimulated the production of goods for consumption within African societies as well as goods that were in demand overseas.⁷

It is true that in pre-colonial Zambia, as in other parts of Africa, trading practices were often very different from those of modern commerce. There was no money. Some goods, such as wire, beads and copper crosses, were used as currency, since they were in general demand and could thus be exchanged easily for the goods which a buyer really wanted. But all trade took the form of barter-the direct exchange of one commodity for another. Nor were there any regular markets, though people might gather for a time with

goods for sale at places where a particular item, such as iron or salt, was manufactured. Full-time, professional craftsmen and traders were rare: most people who produced, sold and transported goods were also subsistence cultivators, who spent part of the year in their own fields. In fact, much exchange of goods was not, strictly speaking, trade at all, since it was organized by political authorities rather than by people with purely economic motives. In the absence of markets, it was often chiefs who played the leading part in collecting and distributing the goods produced and wanted by their subjects. People would pay tribute to their chiefs in local products, and from this wealth chiefs would feed their people in times of war or famine, and supply them with tools and weapons. The important thing to note is that everywhere goods were produced and exchanged in one way or another. And in the course of time local networks of trade and exchange expanded on the basis of new skills and new trading contacts. Local trade, by building up the wealth and power of certain leaders, enabled them to supply the goods demanded by peoples living at great distances, and eventually these included not only other Africans but also Arabs and Europeans. The export of ivory and slaves was not simply a drastic and calamitous upheaval; rather, it was a stage-albeit a very important one-in the long process by which Zambian peoples increased their ability to exploit their environment and expanded their contacts and horizons to connect up with the outside world.

South-western Zambia

In south-western Zambia we can trace back the history of industry and trade to the beginnings of the Iron Age in this part of Africa. Until around the time of Christ the inhabitants of central and southern Africa were all hunters and gatherers, who physically and culturally resembled the ~~Bushmen~~ ^{SAN} who survive today in the Kalahari desert. Such hunters would always have lived in small bands, continually on the move in search of game. But during the first few centuries A.D. Zambia was settled by people who knew how to grow crops and how to make iron; they were at least partly Negro in physical type and can be assumed to have spoken Bantu languages. In southern Zambia, especially on the Batoka plateau, such people found good farming country. They occupied several sites, on and off, for periods of two centuries or more, and as their debris piled up it formed a record of their material culture which archaeologists have now begun to reveal. Carbon-14 analysis of bone and charcoal has made it possible to give very rough dates for some of these remains.

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As a result, we know a good deal about people who lived in southern Zambia between about A.D. 200 and A.D. 1400.⁸

(a) The earlier Iron Age

Iron. In pre-colonial days, iron was produced in Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa, by smelting iron ore in clay-lined furnaces, heated by burning charcoal. A furnace was ventilated by clay draught-pipes (tuye'res) which projected from its base. The shape and size of the furnaces built in southern Zambia made it necessary to pump air into their draught-pipes with bellows.⁹

Q. Our evidence for iron-working southern Zambia comes mainly from two areas in which iron ore of good quality was fairly abundant: the country north-west of Livingstone, around the Machili river, and the Lusaka area. At Machili itself, near the confluence of the Machili and Zambezi rivers, a piece of ferricrete (iron-bearing rock) has been dated to around the first or second centuries A.D. There is no rock of this kind in the immediate neighbourhood, so it is reasonable to suppose that such ferricrete was brought from somewhere else for the purpose of smelting. At Dambwa, just outside Livingstone, tuye're fragments and a great deal of iron slag have been found; the latter has been dated to about the seventh or eighth century A.D.¹⁰ Ferricrete near Livingstone could have supplied ore for the furnaces which have been excavated in the area: one of these has been dated to the sixteenth or seventeenth century.¹¹ In the nineteenth century, as I indicate below, there were several iron workings in the country north and north-west of Dambwa and Machili.¹²

Recent excavations in the Lusaka area have revealed much evidence of early iron-working. Many remains of furnaces, and much slag, have been found at Kapwirimbwe, near the Natural Resources Development College on the Great East Road. These have been dated to about the fifth ^{AD} century A.D. The excavator, David Phillipson, considers that smelting activity at Kapwirimbwe appears to have been unusually intensive, and he notes that there is a rich deposit of iron ore a few miles east of Kapwirimbwe.¹³ In the nearby suburb of Olympia Park another early site of iron smelting was discovered near Twickenham Road, when work began on building Parliament. This site has been dated to some time around A.D. 1000.¹⁴ In the nineteenth century the Soli people, who live in the Lusaka area, were well known for their skill as iron smelters and smiths, and there are many iron smelting furnaces along the upper Chongwe river, north-east of Lusaka.¹⁵

* In other parts of southern Zambia iron may well have been rather scarce. There are scattered outcrops of iron ore, as on the Kalomo river, but working them may often have been too laborious to be profitable. We have a clue to this scarcity from Isamu Pati, a site near the modern town of Kalomo, which was occupied between about A.D. 700 and 1200. Remains of furnaces have been found here, and also iron hoes and other tools, but the latter are very much worn, suggesting that they were hard to replace.¹⁶ Livingstone noted in 1855 that wooden hoes were much used along the lower Kafue,¹⁷ and in 1886 Holub observed that the rectangular

hoe used by the Toka 'is a much desired and expensive trading object in the area within the large bend of the Zambezi'.¹⁸ Even on the basis of our present limited evidence, we can perceive that iron production was concentrated in certain areas, and that from early times iron products were probably traded to less favoured areas. *Local Trade*

Salt. Salt was another basic commodity which was often scarce in pre-colonial days. It was produced from outcrops of salt-bearing earth or grass. First, the earth or burnt grass was diluted in water; then the solution was filtered, leaving brine. This in turn was evaporated by boiling, leaving a residue of more or less pure salt. But there were few places in ~~which~~ the earth or grass was rich enough in salt to yield enough for more than the needs of nearby villages. One such place is Basanga, at the west end of the Kafue Flats. Here salt is still made today from earth scooped up near the edge of the flats; it is possible to see the resulting pits and earth dumps when the floodwaters recede from the plain. It is not clear how old this industry is, but there are mounds near Basanga which were occupied by herdsmen and cultivators at different periods between about A.D. 1000 and about 1100.¹⁹ It is extremely likely that such people exploited the local salt; indeed, this may have been one reason why they settled in the area. In the last century Ila sold Basanga salt for ironwork from the west.²⁰ Nearly two hundred miles to the north, at Kaimbwe, near Kasempa, there is another rich salt deposit of good quality.²¹ And far to the east, near the mouth of the Kafue river, Livingstone noted in 1860 that 'Much salt is made in the rivulet Lositu (Lusitu) and sold in large quantities, and very cheap'.²² This industry is not mentioned in a Portuguese report on the region in 1890, but the report does refer to the production and sale of good salt in what seems to be the country

Copper. Copper was smelted in pre-colonial days in much the same way as iron. We have no direct evidence from archaeology of copper production in Zambia during the earlier Iron Age. But strips of copper wire and bangles dated to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. have been found at Kalomo, at Dambwa, and at nearby Rumadzulo; they have also been found in the lower levels of the Ingombe Ilede site, near the Lusitu river (probably ninth and tenth centuries A.D.).²⁴ As yet, we can only guess where such copper came from, but two probable sources are the area west of Sinoia, in Rhodesia, and an ~~area~~ east of the Hook of Kafue. In both these areas much copper was produced in the last century.²⁵ In sites near Lusaka no copper has been found at levels dated to the first millennium A.D. At Twickenham Road it first appears at a level dated to the eleventh or twelfth century A.D., in association with pottery that resembles finds from Copperbelt sites.²⁶ This strongly indicates the southward spread of new influences, especially as it is fairly certain that copper was produced near the Copperbelt by this time. Fragments of worked copper, dated to the ninth or tenth century A.D., have been found at Chondwe, near the modern Bwana Mkubwa mine, and the fragments were almost certainly the product of local industry.²⁷ At such early periods copper production was evidently rather limited in scale, but by the nineteenth century, as we shall see, it had become a major industry.

Other trade. Iron, salt and copper were the main items in early ^{trans} Zambian trade, but other, less valuable products presumably also played some part. Pottery has probably always been an important item of local trade, since the necessary clay is found only in certain areas. Bark-cloth may also have been traded, since the necessary trees are not found everywhere.²⁸ But it does not appear that cotton was grown or woven during the early Iron Age, since the remains from this period do not include any evidence of spinning.

(b) The growth of trade

During the first few centuries of the Iron Age in southern Zambia it is probable that manufacturing techniques were somewhat primitive and that trade took place in a limited number of goods and over fairly short distances. But there is evidence to suggest that between about the eighth and fifteenth centuries the volume of trade increased, and the range of trading contacts was considerably extended, so that in a few areas at least people gained access to goods from the east coast. And as a result of this growth of trade there was increased

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movement of both people and ideas, leading to a noticeable technical improvement in crafts and industries.²⁹

The clearest indication of a growth in the volume and regularity of trade is the appearance of trade goods of standard size and weight, which could have been used as currency. Metal at the earliest Iron Age sites consists only of tools and ornaments. But by about the eighth century A.D. copper crosses of standard size were being made in Katanga, as we know from the great cemetery at Sanga, near Lake Kisale. In Zambia similar crosses have been found at Ingombe Ilede, together with trade wire bent in standard lengths, in burials dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.³⁰

Ingombe Ilede also provides evidence for the development of long-distance trade. Imports from the African coast are uncommon in early Iron Age sites. A few cowrie shells from the east coast were found at Kalundu mound, near Kalomo, and at Gundu, farther north; these sites were probably occupied between the fourth and sixth centuries A.D. A few conus-shell ornaments and glass beads were found at Isamu Pati, near Kalundu; these probably date from about the eleventh century.³¹ The few glass beads from Basanga have been dated to about 1100; and there were a few beads in the lower levels at Ingombe Ilede, dated to about the ninth century. But the burials in the upper levels (about 1400) included not only sea-shells, but a great many glass beads and also fragments of Indian cloth.³²

There is in fact every reason to suppose that by 1400, or so, Ingombe Ilede had become a major commercial centre. It was a meeting-point for trade both in goods produced locally for everyday use and in long-distance imports and exports. The main raw materials available in the neighbourhood were salt, beside the Lusitu river, and ivory, from the large elephant herds which may be presumed to have occupied the flood plain of the middle Zambezi, as they have in recent times. Many fragments of ivory were preserved in the excavation site.³³ The salt would have stimulated trade from earliest times, while the foreign beads and cloth may have been purchased mainly with ivory. At the same time, people at Ingombe Ilede also made their own cotton cloth: the burial goods included pottery spindle-whorls. Since these are not found in the lower levels, dated to about 1000, we may infer that cotton spinning (and with it, presumably, cotton cultivation) was introduced sometime after this date and before about 1400. At this period, the craft was probably new to southern Zambia in general, for elsewhere in the region spindle-whorls have been found only at Lochinvar Ranch, at a level occupied some time after about 1200, and at an undated site now under Lake Kariba.³⁴

Many objects in iron, copper, and also gold were found at Ingombe Ilede. These metals were imported, but some metal-working took place at the site, both to meet local demands and for purposes of long-distance trade. Little iron slag was found in the remains, and there is no other evidence of smelting in the area: iron was probably imported from the north, around Lusaka, or perhaps from the country east of the Luangwa-Zambezi confluence, where iron was certainly produced in later times.³⁵ Outside the central burials at Ingombe Ilede many worn iron hoes were found; these were obviously used for cultivation and may either have been imported or

forged on the spot. Copper tools, beads and bangles, and iron wire-drawing tools, indicate that the inhabitants of Ingombe Ilede worked copper which they had obtained in the form of crosses, and it is likely that at least some of their copper products were exported. We know that people north of the middle Zambezi sold copper to Mwenemutapa, lower down the river, by the early sixteenth century. Gold beads, bracelets and a hacking-plate were found in the central burials: we do not know where they were made, but the gold itself probably came from the Rhodesian plateau to the south-east.³⁶ There is good reason to suppose that the later occupation of Ingombe Ilede was contemporary with the peak of Zimbabwe's importance as a commercial and political centre.³⁷

* The evidence that fine wire was made at Ingombe Ilede indicates that metal-working techniques had advanced considerably in southern Zambia since the early Iron Age. Indeed, there is convincing testimony that between about 1000 and 1500 improved methods of iron-working spread southwards from the Congo. The central burials at Ingombe Ilede included not only wire-drawing tools but special long-bladed hoes and flange-welded single bells. Making such objects means knowing how to make strong sheet iron and weld it, and how to make midribs. Whether or not these objects were actually made at Ingombe Ilede or imported, they are evidence of contacts with Katanga, for at Sanga, near Lake Kisale, flange-welded bells have been dated to as early as the eighth century A.D.³⁸ Such Congolese influence in metal-working became still more pronounced in the last few centuries before 1900. This was probably due to a general expansion of trading net-works, as well as the migration into Zambia of groups associated with chiefdoms in the Congo. The ceremonial iron bells, bow-stands and stools of many Zambian chiefs, and perhaps also the natural-draught furnaces of northern Zambia, betray Congolese influence.³⁹ They certainly bear witness both to the developing skills and to the widening range of social contacts stimulated by trade.

* The growth of chieftainship in Zambia was in fact both cause and effect of the expansion of trade. Migrations which resulted in the foundation of new chiefdoms or dynasties might be prompted by the desire to gain access to economic resources. And the increased scale of political organization both made possible, and was made possible by, a growth in the scale of economic exchanges. In western Zambia a striking example of this is the Lozi kingdom. From the late eighteenth century, at least, Lozi rulers organized and encouraged exchanges between the inhabitants of the Lozi flood plain and those of the surrounding woodland. From the plain came cattle, fish, otter skins, basket-work, sorghum and root crops; from the woodland came woodwork, bark-cloth, bark rope, fishnets, wild fruits, honey, grain and the skins of game. Salt came from Mankoya, and from pans west of the plain.⁴⁰ During the nineteenth century copper was obtained near the Dongwe river.⁴¹ Ironwork was supplied by the Kwangwa, Toka and Totela; not only to the Lozi and their immediate neighbours but also to the Ila and Tonga, in the east, and to the Mpukushu on the Okavango river, in the far west.⁴² The work of these smiths was highly praised by James Chapman, an English trader who reached the upper Zambezi in 1853: he reported that they worked

in iron and copper; of the former they smelt abundance, of a very superior quality, and manufacture it into implements, which considering their rude materials, would astonish any European. Hoes, spears, lances, battle-axes, bows and arrows, are abundant and cheap, of excellent workmanship, and are even chased and ornamented.⁴³

* North-eastern Zambia.

In some respects the history of local trade in north-eastern Zambia is less well known than that of local trade in the south-west, since very little work has yet been done on the Iron Age archaeology of the north-east. It is in fact likely that trade and industry developed rather later in that region than in the south; we should certainly not expect to find any site in the north-east comparable to Ingombe Ilede. None the less, we do know a certain amount about the patterns of local trade and exchange during the nineteenth century. Little of our evidence refers to the period before 1850, but it is reasonable to suppose that trading patterns after that date were partly a continuation of earlier patterns, at least when the items of exchange were locally produced necessities.

* The following short account is drawn from a study of the Bemba,⁴⁴ a people more famous for ~~raiding~~ ^(Bambaland) than for trading. But it is probable that the power of Bemba chiefs was to a great extent due to their ability to exchange a variety of goods among themselves and their followers. Some of these goods were obtained through raiding, but much was also obtained by levying tribute, and this was not a one-way process either within or outside Bambaland: tribute in labour or goods was rewarded by the distribution of other goods, or the assurance of military protection and political support.

* Thus the Bemba played a considerable part in the exchange of commodities produced in north-eastern Zambia. Bemba country itself had few natural resources: the central, and oldest, areas provided little more than the poor soils, trees and game of the woodland, and the fish of the Chambeshi river. But all round the Bemba there was considerable variety of terrain and hence of resources. The Bemba were thus well placed to gain access to a variety of goods: ironwork and basketwork, salt and cattle, and much more fish and ivory.

- Iron. There seems to have been little workable iron ore in Bemba country, and the Bemba themselves had no traditions of smelting. But they probably obtained iron and ironwork from their neighbours at an early date: Bemba traditions indicate that there were iron-workers in and around Bambaland when the founders of the Chitimukulu dynasty arrived, perhaps in the later seventeenth century.⁴⁵

In the nineteenth century the Bemba obtained iron from the Lungu, Mambwe, Iwa, Chishinga and Lala. Of these, the Lungu were probably the most important for the Bemba. Iron was extracted and smelted around the watershed between the Luombe and Lufubu rivers.⁴⁶ On

the south-eastern fringes of this area Lungu smiths came to settle under Bemba chiefs, to whom they paid tribute in hoes and axes.

The Mambwe were also well known for iron-working. In 1879 there were eight furnaces on one hillside, each capable of smelting nearly half a ton of iron ore; the Mambwe chief Fwambo was said to export a great deal of iron.⁴⁷ On the eastern borders of Bemba country,

iron was smelted in and around the country of the Iwa chief Kafwimbi. Some of the smelters there belonged to a small group known as the Sukuma, who probably also operated the few smelters found in the central part of Bisa country (which was conquered by the Bemba).⁴⁸

The southern Bisa obtained their iron from the Lala, whose output was famous for its quality and quantity; there was a particularly large open mine in the country of chief Mailo.⁴⁹ The Bemba, however, may not have gained access to Lala ironwork much before 1880; more

continuously important for them were the industries to the west of Lake Bangweulu. Especially productive were those in the Chishinga chiefdom of Chama, on the eastern borders of Kazembe's kingdom, though smelting was also practised close to Kazembe's capital.⁵⁰

Salt: Salt was also an item of considerable importance in the trade of the north-eastern plateau. Many damboes furnished a saline grass which was burnt to yield a salty ash for immediate and local use, but there were only two places in the region where salt was produced in any quantity. There is a great abundance of rich saline grass in Chibwa marsh, on the Luitikila river, near Mpika. In 1832 the Portuguese explorer Antonio Gamitto noted that the salt made there was relatively pure, though much weaker than mineral salt, and it commanded a high price. Both Bemba and Bisa made salt there in his day, and from accounts of the industry early in this century it would seem that a number of people from the surrounding country came to spend a month or two making salt in September and October, when the dambo had dried up.⁵¹ Each worker had to pay a ball of salt to the local chief, Chikwanda, and in the 1890's he in turn sent a hundred cakes every year both to Chitimukulu, the Bemba paramount, and to another senior Bemba chief, Nkula. The only other area of intensive salt production in the region was the country east of the north end of Lake Nweru. Here there are several outcrops of saline soil, especially near Puta and Kaputa. These were worked mainly by the local Bwile and Tabwa people, who sold the salt in standard loads of about twentyfive pounds.⁵² These industries, at Chibwa, Puta and Kaputa, persist today, though on a much reduced scale.

Other trade. The iron and salt thus produced provided the basis for a not inconsiderable trade among the peoples of north-eastern Zambia. Among the Bemba, iron and salt were partly circulated in the form of tribute payments and the gifts which might be made in return. Chiefs sometimes organized expeditions to obtain such goods at source: in 1883 Nkula received in this way a consignment of salt from the Luitikila.⁵³ But it seems that ordinary Bemba might also obtain iron and salt at source on their own initiative: Bemba chiefs imposed no restrictions, other than the levy of tribute, on the production and exchange of these commodities. Bemba commoners occasionally visited the Lunda (and presumably the less distant Chishinga) to buy hoes; they also went to the Luitikila for salt.⁵⁴ Bisa from Chief Chibesakunda's area (in Chinsali district) obtained salt from the Luitikila and used it to buy ironwork from the Sukuma under Chief Kefwimbi. The southern Bisa exchanged salt for iron

continuously important for them were the industries to the west of Lake Bangweulu. Especially productive were those in the Chishinga chiefdom of Chama, on the eastern borders of Kazembe's kingdom, though smelting was also practised close to Kazembe's capital.⁵⁰

Salt: Salt was also an item of considerable importance in the trade of the north-eastern plateau. Many damboes furnished a saline grass which was burnt to yield a salty ash for immediate and local use, but there were only two places in the region where salt was produced in any quantity. There is a great abundance of rich saline grass in Chibwa marsh, on the Luitikila river, near Mpika. In 1832 the Portuguese explorer Antonio Gamitto noted that the salt made there was relatively pure, though much weaker than mineral salt, and it commanded a high price. Both Bemba and Bisa made salt there in his day, and from accounts of the industry early in this century it would seem that a number of people from the surrounding country came to spend a month or two making salt in September and October, when the dambo had dried up.⁵¹ Each worker had to pay a ball of salt to the local chief, Chikwanda, and in the 1890's he in turn sent a hundred cakes every year both to Chitimukulu, the Bemba paramount, and to another senior Bemba chief, Nkula. The only other area of intensive salt production in the region was the country east of the north end of Lake Nweru. Here there are several outcrops of saline soil, especially near Puta and Kaputa. These were worked mainly by the local Bwile and Tabwa people, who sold the salt in standard loads of about twentyfive pounds.⁵² These industries, at Chibwa, Puta and Kaputa, persist today, though on a much reduced scale.

Other trade. The iron and salt thus produced provided the basis for a not inconsiderable trade among the peoples of north-eastern Zambia. Among the Bemba, iron and salt were partly circulated in the form of tribute payments and the gifts which might be made in return. Chiefs sometimes organized expeditions to obtain such goods at source: in 1883 Nkula received in this way a consignment of salt from the Luitikila.⁵³ But it seems that ordinary Bemba might also obtain iron and salt at source on their own initiative: Bemba chiefs imposed no restrictions, other than the levy of tribute, on the production and exchange of these commodities. Bemba commoners occasionally visited the Lunda (and presumably the less distant Chshinga) to buy hoes; they also went to the Luitikila for salt.⁵⁴ Bisa from Chief Chibesakunda's area (in Chinsali district) obtained salt from the Luitikila and used it to buy ironwork from the Sukuma under Chief Kefwimbi. The southern Bisa exchanged salt for iron

from the Lala, and both Bemba and Bisa sold salt and iron to the Senga on the upper Luangwa, who in return supplied tobacco, mats and baskets, and also grain and cotton. The Senga and Bisa are said to have woven cloth from their own cotton; the Tambo on the upper Luangwa certainly did so, and so did the Lungu, who sometimes paid tribute in cotton to the Bemba.⁵⁵ The Bemba themselves were well known for their skill in making bark-cloth; this was the usual material component of marriage payments, and some may well have been traded to neighbours in less densely wooded areas lacking in the necessary trees.⁵⁶ The Unga, in the swamps of Lake Bangweulu, and the Bisa of Chief Mutipa (north-east of the lake) exported dried fish, nets, mats and baskets; otter skins were traded all round the north and east of the lake, and the Unga exchanged fish and antelope meat for ironwork from the Bena Mukulu on the northern shore.⁵⁷ Cattle and other livestock were unimportant in plateau trade, since they could be bred only in tsetse-free areas; the only people who kept herds of any size were the Lungu, Mambwe and Iwa. The Bemba however, frequently raided these peoples for cattle, and sometimes levied tribute from them in cattle, sheep and goats.⁵⁸ Such levies undoubtedly increased the ability of Bemba chiefs to attract a following and thus, indirectly, to draw tribute from their own people. We have already seen that at Ingombe Ilede there is evidence of trade between the middle Zambezi and the east coast by the fourteenth or fifteenth century. We do not know what sort of people introduced the exotic goods found there—the glass beads, shells and Indian cloth. Such discoveries in the African interior are not necessarily proof of visits by non-African people; they could well have passed through the hands of a number of different traders. But it is quite possible that Arab, or Swahili, traders did visit Ingombe Ilede. We know that from the tenth century at least gold and ivory were exported from Sofala, around the mouth of the Zambezi.⁵⁹ At some time during the next few centuries traders from the coast appear to have pushed their way far inland. Some may well have bought ivory at Ingombe Ilede, and it is noteworthy that two Muslim-style amulet holders were found beside one of the gold burials there.⁶⁰ But the chief attraction for foreign traders would have been the actual gold-producing areas south of the Zambezi. By 1500 there were a great many Muslim traders in the empire of Mwenemutapa, according to a report by an early Portuguese official in Mozambique.⁶¹

The Portuguese from Mozambique

In the course of the sixteenth century the Portuguese ousted the Muslims from the trade of the Zambezi valley. Like the Muslims, the Portuguese concentrated their attention on the empire of Mwenemutapa (which had broken up into independent kingdoms). They ignored the country north of the Zambezi, since it seemed to have little or no gold. But at the end of the seventeenth century the Rozwi king Changamire (who used Zimbabwe as a capital) drove the Portuguese traders right off the Rhodesian plateau and back to their bases at Tete and Sena, on the lower Zambezi. Thereafter Changamire dominated the gold trade south of the Zambezi, and the Portuguese began instead to look more closely at the country to the north and west.⁶² To the north, the Portuguese entered into close contact with the Chewa king Undi, who was stimulated by this new opportunity for selling ivory to extend his rule over the Nsenga people. Around the mid-eighteenth century, the Portuguese began to exploit several small gold mines in Undi's country; their employment of slaves in this work, and in ivory hunting, provoked increasing raids and disturbances.⁶³

✓ In the west, agents of the Portuguese seem to have reached the lower Luangwa, and the mouth of the Kafue, by 1696; they brought back ivory, gold and copper.⁶⁴ Some time around 1720 some Goans, Domingo de founded a trading post at Zumbo, to the east of the Luangwa-Zambezi confluence, and in 1732 another post was opened across the Luangwa at Feira. Both posts were occupied, on and off, until 1836 (Zumbo was re-opened in 1861).⁶⁵ Their main purpose was to regain access to the gold of Rhodesia, but their trade was soon boosted by enterprising Africans from the north. In 1762 it was reported that people from 'Urenje' (probably the country of the Lenje, to the north-west) come every year to Zumbo to trade in ivory and in copper, which they bring ready smelted in great bars, and of which there is great abundance. For its quality it is preferred in India to that which comes from Europe.⁶⁶

Sometimes the Portuguese traders kept all their trade goods for buying gold from the south, so that the Lenje had to go back with their ivory and copper unsold. But by 1783 the Portuguese were sufficiently interested to send agents with Indian beads and cloth to buy ivory and copper from the Lenje, and ivory from the Nsenga (who were also well known for their iron industry).⁶⁷ By 1798 groups of Lamba, Ambo, and possibly Lala, were also trading with Zumbo.

The Lunda and the Bisa

18th

Century

This trade in the later eighteenth century between Zumbo and the country to the north-west almost certainly profited from the expansion of trade connected with the growth of Kazembe's Lunda kingdom ~~which~~ had been founded early in the eighteenth century as a result of migration from the Lunda empire of Mwata Yamvo, in western Katanga. The chief aim of the expeditions was ~~to~~ ^{the} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~again~~ ^{to} ~~control~~ of the salt pans at Kecila, on the Lualaba river, and Mwanshya, on the Lufira river; and probably also the copper mines at Kambove, near the modern Jadotville. Once Kazembe was established on the Luapula, he and his successors sent tribute in salt and copper to Mwata Yamvo.⁶⁹ Such tribute was duly reciprocated by Mwata Yamvo, and as a result north-eastern Zambia was drawn into a trading orbit which covered much of what is now southern Congo and northern Angola, and reached as far as the west coast. For early in the eighteenth century Lunda from Mwata Yamvo conquered the Pende, on the Kasai, and some went on west to the middle Kwango, to found the chiefdom of Mwene Puto Kasongo. These traded with the Portuguese on the coast and were thus able to forward European goods to Mwata Yamvo. However, the States of Matamba and Kasanje acted as middlemen in this trade, and it was evidently to remove this obstacle to direct contact with the coast that Lunda attacked these States in 1767. The Lunda do not seem to have achieved their aim, but by the later eighteenth century they were exporting slaves north-wards to the lower Congo. Some of these slaves came from Kazembe on the Luapula, and in any case Kazembe was able to exchange his salt and copper at Mwata Yamvo's for a variety of imports from the west coast, even though Mwata Yamvo did not make direct contact with the Portuguese until the middle years of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰

By 1800, then, the eastern Lunda kingdom had become an important partner in the trade of west central Africa. But it also contributed significantly to the trade of eastern Africa: indeed, Kazembe's capital on the Luapula became the meeting point of trade routes which spanned the continent. The eastern Lunda maintained the eastward impetus of their original migration: during the reign of Kazembe III (c.1760-1804/5), they subjected several chiefdoms east of the Luapula, among the Chishinga, Tabwa, Lungu and Bisa.⁷¹ And in collaboration with Bisa traders Kazembe rapidly opened up trade routes leading to the east coast. The Lunda themselves were a relatively small ruling class who occupied themselves in politics.

rather than the actual practice of trade or industry. The western Bisa, however, had probably been active for some time in local trade. They occupied an ecological borderland, between the great swamps ✓ around Lake Bangweulu and the woodland of the Bemba plateau; in the nineteenth century, as we have seen, the western Bisa traded extensively in the products of both regions. Thus when they came under Kazembe's rule in the later eighteenth century it was natural that they should take a leading share in the export of copper and ivory from his dominions. | Bisa traders exchanged ivory for cloth with the Portuguese at Tete, Mozambique and Quilimane, though by 1800 they found better customers in the Yao, east of Lake Malawi, who took the ivory on to Zanzibar.⁷² By 1806 some Bisa were taking Kazembe's ivory westwards as far as the Lunda king Kasongo ~~Maebast~~ on the Kwango.⁷³ By the 1850's the Bemba had taken over much country formerly tributary to Kazembe, but the Bisa continued to export his copper, while they obtained ivory from the Manganja, Chewa and Lamba, among others.⁷⁴ In 1856 a chief living below the Kafue gorge sent ivory to other chiefs on the Zambezi and received in return English cotton goods brought up by Bisa traders from Mozambique. One Bisa party was bold enough to seek trade among the fierce Ndebele, but they were robbed and barely escaped with their lives.⁷⁵ In 1863 Livingstone met some Bisa beside Lake Malawi who were familiar with chiefs of the southern Lunda, on the headwaters of the Zambezi; as he observed,

✓ These Babisa are great travellers and traders, in fact, occupy some-what the same position in this country as the Greeks do in the Levant.⁷⁶

Arabs and Swahili

In the course of the 1860's the trade of the Bisa was disrupted by the Ngoni, whose raids west of the Luangwa persisted after Mpezeni moved east of the river into Nsenga country.⁷⁷ But well before this the trade between Kazembe and the south-east had been undermined by the development further north of new trade routes to the east coast. From 1830, at least Kazembe was visited by a number of Swahili and Arab traders, a few of whom went on west to Katanga and the upper Zambezi, and even to Benguela, on the west coast.⁷⁸ Such expeditions west of the Luapula were halted by the rise of Msiri, a Nyamwezi trader from western Tanzania, who settled in Katanga in the 1850's. At first Msiri was a vassal of Kazembe, but he soon became independent, gained control of the salt and copper of Katanga, and thus built up an empire of his own. Instead, the Arabs and Swahili concentrated on Manyema, in the eastern Congo, and on the country between Kazembe's and Lake Tanganyika. Here they established settlements for trade with the Tabwa, Lunda and Bemba, and they exported their ivory

to Zanzibar usually by way of Lake Tanganyika and the country around it.⁷⁹ From the 1870's, the foreign traders also exported slaves, but this trade seems to have become of major importance in north-eastern Zambia only from about 1880.⁸⁰ (It should perhaps be stressed that in this region slaves were seldom a feature of the local economies, since the local people, and especially the warlike Bemba, had no use for extra labour in their largely infertile lands.)

The north-west

In north-western Zambia access to goods from the coast was first brought about by the expansion of trade farther west, in what is now central Angola. This was a rather late development. In 1696 it was said that Africans reached the middle Zambezi from Angola,⁸¹ but this was probably an exceptional event. Trade between the Zambezi and the west coast was primarily a result of the growth of trade among the Ovimbundu, on the Benguela Highland. These people became as famous for long-distance trade as the Bisa or Nyamwezi, and it seems likely that their commercial enterprise also owed much to a lively local trade, solidly based on iron production.⁸² The Ovimbundu were probably selling slaves and ivory to Portuguese traders up country by the earlier eighteenth century, but such trade increased considerably in the 1770's, when the Ovimbundu established direct relations with the Portuguese on the coast.⁸³ This evidently prompted both the Ovimbundu and Portuguese or half-caste traders to penetrate east-wards into the interior. By the 1790's the Luvale, on the western headwaters of the Zambezi, were accustomed to obtain cloth and beads from 'white men' from the west, and some Luvale went westwards themselves. As a result of information supplied by a Luvale, a Brazilian and a Portuguese led expeditions in 1794-5 from Benguela through Ovimbundu country and as far as the Luvale chiefs Kakenge and Chinyama (then living in what is now eastern Angola).⁸⁴

It would seem that as yet the traders from the west had not reached the Lozi kingdom, but they knew of its existence: indeed, the reports of the 1794-5 expeditions indicate that by this time the Lozi had made their villages on mounds in the Zambezi flood plain, the building of which was organized by king Mulambwa.⁸⁵ In any case, the Lozi soon sought to take part in this new trade among their northern neighbours. Mulambwa sent men to the Luvale to buy European goods, and the southern Lunda brought cloth to Mulambwa in exchange for cattle. In due course some Mambari (a term loosely applied to Ovimbundu or coloured traders from the west)

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came south to buy slaves from Mulambwa, but they had no success, for Mulambwa needed all the labour he could get for the work of building ponds and fish weirs on the flood plain.⁸⁶ Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the Mambari appear to have concentrated ~~their~~ ^{the} energies to the north and east of the Lozi kingdom. From early in the century they bought slaves from the Lunda chief Ishinde and from the Lamba chief Mkumine.⁸⁷ By 1830 traders travelled between the Luvale chief Kakenge and Kazembe on the Luapula.⁸⁸ The abolition, in 1834, of the Portuguese royal monopoly in ivory gave a new impetus to trade eastwards from Angola.⁸⁹ In the early 1850's the Luvale were well known for having guns and cloth, and Kakenge was busy selling slaves to Mambari; the Lunda chief Ishinde had several guns.⁹⁰ Traders in slaves and ivory, Mambari as well as Bisa and 'Portuguese' from the east, frequented the country around the Kafue Hook. Mambarim Luvale, Bisa and Swahili traders all visited the Lamba, and the Lenje were said to have plenty of beads and cloth.⁹¹ Monze's village, among the Plateau Tonga, was visited both by Mambari from the west and by Nsonga ivory traders from the east.⁹²

By ~~this~~ time, of course, important changes had taken place in the Lozi kingdom, and these had hastened its inclusion in the orbit of the western traders. In about 1840 the Kololo, under Sebitwane, invaded the flood plain, and the Lozi king, Mubukwanu, established a new capital at Lukulu, at the north end of the plain. Here he continued to receive varied tribute, and by 1848 this included ivory, which suggests that he was doing business with the Mambari. At all events he received a visit in that year from Silva Porto, a white trader based on the Ovimbunduchiefdom of Viye (Buge),⁹³ Shortly afterwards Mubukwanu died and was succeeded by his son, Imasiku, but it was not long before Sebitwane, based on Linyanti in the south, launched a successful attack on Lukulu, and Imasiku fled up the Kabompo river to Lukwakwa.⁹⁴ It seems clear that the chief aims of Sebitwane's campaign were both to gain control of the flood plain and to enable the Kololo to obtain a larger share of the western trade.⁹⁵ He had already received cloth on occasion from Lunda chiefs, in exchange for cattle,⁹⁶ but he was anxious to obtain guns as well.⁹⁷ In 1850 Sebitwane was at Naliele, near the former Lozi capital, when some Mambari came down the Zambezi. They met Sebitwane at Libonda and he offered them cattle and ivory, but they wanted slaves, and with some reluctance Sebitwane supplied a few in order to obtain guns. A party of Kololo then joined the Mambari in a raid on the Ila; the Mambari took away about two hundred slaves, and in return supplied the Kololo with much English cloth.⁹⁸

These contacts served to whet Kololo appetites for long-distance trade, but the Kololo were also anxious to be independent of the Mambari; not only were Mambari guns of poor quality⁹⁹ but Mambari prices were unattractive.¹⁰⁰ Even at Linyanti the Kololo were masters of an extensive system of local exchange,¹⁰¹ and thus enriched they would have been inclined to strike harder bargains than less powerful people such as the Luvale or southern Lunda. A Mambari visit to Linyanti in May 1853 had little success.¹⁰² Soon afterwards, Sebitwane's successor Sekeletu arranged that Livingstone (then on his second visit to Linyanti) should accompany a Kololo expedition up the Zambezi and over the west coast, there to open up direct trade with the Portuguese. The reasons for this venture were perhaps as much strategic as economic. Owing partly to a preference for cattle raiding among the older Kololo, the Kololo capital remained in the south, at Linyanti.¹⁰³ Thus Sekeletu had little control over the northern approaches to the flood plain. His authority there was threatened from at least two quarters. Imasiku, the Lozi exile at Lukwakwa, traded there with Mambari.¹⁰⁴ Still more disturbing was the behaviour of Mpepe, a Kololo royal who some time before 1850 had settled at Naliéle and had set himself up as governor of the Lozi heartland.¹⁰⁵ He appears to have levied extensive tribute from the flood plain,¹⁰⁶ and he was much better placed than the Kololo at Linyanti for trade with the Mambari. Early in 1853 Silva Porto returned to the upper Zambezi; he was welcomed at Naliéle by Mpepe, who apparently gave him both cattle and ivory belonging to Sekeletu, and allowed him to hunt for slaves lower down the Zambezi valley and among the Toka and Ilg. Silva Porto gave Mpepe a large gun, and he evidently supported Mpepe's plans to assassinate Sekeletu. To this end, Mpepe went down the Zambezi in June, but the plot leaked out, and it was Sekeletu who killed Mpepe.¹⁰⁷

The Kololo expedition to the west coast reached Luanda with Livingstone in 1854, and the prospects for trade there seemed so good that soon after their return in 1855 Sekeletu sent two more ivory caravans to Kyabda,¹⁰⁸ In about 1859 a Kololo party reached Benguela, thus making a more direct challenge to the Mambari, though their attempt to bring ^{horses} bourses back with them was unsuccessful.¹⁰⁹ The Kololo ventures may have prompted the Mambari to lower their prices; at all events, the latter were buying plenty of ivory at the Kololo capital by 1860.¹¹⁰ Thereafter, the rulers of Bulozzi seem not to have organized any further expeditions to the west coast. This may partly have been due to internal political conflicts, but the steadily rising demand for ivory in world markets, and the corresponding

destruction of elephant in the African interior, increased Mambari² incentives to trade with Bulozhi, and until the 1880's they managed most of its long-distance trade.¹¹¹

In Bulozhi the ivory trade was always more important than the slave trade. This was chiefly because, as we have seen, there was plenty of scope within the economy of the flood plain for labour in excess of the needs of subsistence agriculture: the rulers of the flood plain were thus disinclined to dispose of war captives and domestic slaves. The Kololo invaders, of course, came from a rather different background, and it is an important question, still awaiting clarification, how far the Kololo regime affected the Lozi economy and the associated administrative organization. To judge from the accounts of Silva Porto and Livingstone, there was no violent disruption: Kololo rulers tended to perpetuate the economic attitudes of their Lozi predecessors. Some Kololo might live primarily for cattle raiding, but their kings at least seem to have appreciated the special new economic advantages afforded by their new conquest, and sought to exploit them rather than ignore them. At all events, neither Sebitwane nor Sekeletu was very eager to sell slaves, and in the 1850's the latter went so far as to prohibit the slave trade in his dominions. He backed this up by enforcing a royal monopoly of ivory; without free access to ivory, the Mambari found the slave trade alone unprofitable.¹¹²

Elsewhere, in the absence of such restrictions, the Angolan slave trade continued to expand. In 1853 Ilacountry was said to be crowded with slavers. These included Arabs from Zanzibar who planned to sell the Ila imports from the west coast and probably sought to sell their slaves there, since there was less risk in exporting them from the west than from the east coast.¹¹³ For the same reason, a few years later, traders from Angola were bringing ivory to the middle Zambezi in order to buy slaves from Tete, lower down the river.¹¹⁴ The demand for slaves on the west coast subsided after Brazil closed ports to slave traders in 1850,¹¹⁵ but the plantations of Sao Tomé continued to provide a market, which was later boosted by the introduction of cocoa there.¹¹⁶ In any case, there was a considerable demand for slaves among certain African peoples, such as the Chokwe in the Angola hinterland; as in East Africa, the fall in slave prices at the coast encouraged the market in slaves for use in the interior.¹¹⁷ The market, of course, included the Lozi, who were willing enough to buy slaves: in the 1870's, after the restoration of the Lozi monarchy, Angolan traders bought slaves from Isiri, in Katanga, and sold them to the Lozi in exchange for ivory.¹¹⁸ As in north-eastern

Zambia, the slave trade was stimulated by the increasing availability of obsolete European guns.¹¹⁹ Not only did these provide a powerful incentive to sell slaves; they also made it easier to catch them.

In the later years of the nineteenth century traders were still selling guns for slaves among the Luvale and southern Lunda, though for these peoples the export of beeswax and rubber was also important.¹²⁰

It was not, however, to the west but to the south that the Lozi established their most important long-distance trading contacts. This process may have begun with the Kololo invasion: Livingstone suggested that Sebitwane had unwittingly opened the upper Zambezi valley to trade by expelling the Toka islanders who had enabled Ndebele raiders to cross the river.¹²¹ Livingstone himself first reached the Lozi in 1851; he was followed by coloured Griqua traders from South Africa, and an increasing number of English hunters and traders.¹²² One of these, George Westbeech, was allowed to set up a permanent camp on the Lozi border, at Pandamatenga; in the 1870's he became a valued adviser to the Lozi court. Lewanika, the Lozi king, preferred when possible to deal with visitors from the south, for they sold guns yet had no need for slaves.¹²³ Before long the rapid growth of contacts between the Lozi kingdom and southern Africa led to the arrival of Christian missionaries and officials of the British South Africa Company.

Conclusion

The rapid growth of the trade in ivory and slaves in the second half of the nineteenth century was an extremely cruel and wasteful process. None the less, it would be wrong to suppose that such trade had a merely destructive effect, or even that it served only to make a few chiefs rich and powerful. As Gluckman, White and Fagan have hinted, the expansion of long-distance trade had important consequences for trade in local products, in Zambia as elsewhere in Africa.¹²⁴

* One obvious result of trade, direct or indirect, with the Portuguese was the introduction of new crops from America: cassava, maize, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, sugar cane, tobacco. By the end of the eighteenth century cassava was a common crop among the Luvale, in the dominions of Mwata Yamvo, and as far east as Kazembe's eastern borders.¹²⁵ By about 1850, if not earlier, all these 'American' crops, and also tomatoes, were abundant in the Lozi flood plain.¹²⁶ Further east, at this latitude, cassava was still rare: it was not reported among the Tonga, Lala or southern Bisa,¹²⁷ and the Tonga, Ila and Bemba did not adopt it until the end of the nineteenth century or later.¹²⁸ Maize and groundnuts, however, were common among the

Plateau Tonga in 1855,¹²⁹ Maize was available at Kazembe's by 1798; among the Bisa north and east of Lake Bangweulu by 1810; and on the southern borders of Bemba country by 1831. Chitimukulu had abundant maize fields in 1883, though in this he was unusual.¹³⁰ Groundnuts were reported among the Bemba in 1867, and sweet potatoes in 1883.¹³¹ The adoption of all these crops can be assumed to have increased food production, by reducing the risk of a total crop failure.¹³² This in itself would have made it easier for people to engage in ~~trade and industry~~; grain was supplied to chiefs' capitals, and to journeying traders. In 1895 the western Ila alleviated a famine with imports of millet and maize.¹³³

Tobacco also became an important feature of some economies. It is not clear how long tobacco has been grown in Zambia, but we know that it was grown particularly in certain areas. Livingstone noted that 'The Batoka tobacco is both very strong and very cheap... the natives come great distances to buy'. The people near the Kalomo river grew large quantities of tobacco which they made into balls for sale in Lozi country. 'Twenty balls, weighing about three-quarters of a pound each, are sold for a hoe.'¹³⁴

The opportunity to supply the needs of industrial and plantation economies far from Zambia directly stimulated ~~local~~ ^{local} trade and industry. There was no barrier between trade in items for local use and trade in items for export overseas. As trading networks expanded, so all trade goods became more easily negotiable. Besides, foreign traders working for long periods in the interior were obliged to engage in local trade in order to stay in business. Thus Swahili in the far north-east used salt from Puta and Kaputa to buy ivory and slaves.¹³⁵ The Bisa who visited Mozambique made bark-cloth with which to buy food from the Chewa; ¹³⁶ they also sold the Chewa salt from the south end of Lake Malawi. Holub, in 1886, was struck by the eager response of the Toka north-west of the Victoria Falls to the advent of long-distance traders:

If the Toka hear that no Mdebele are in the area and that Europeans have arrived from the south in Pandamatenga or Kasungula, they rush there with baskets full of fruits on their carrying poles... Or they bring containers made out of pumpkin or so-called calabashes filled with 30 to 40 kg. of millet, maize, beans or groundnuts... They ask for calico and glass beads for the objects they bring to exchange.

As soon as the transaction is completed, they force the cloth into the calabashes and hurry home happily to their people, where they tell of all they have seen in great detail and great length. This trade is

really well organised, and the Toka like it very much. Often the actual tradesman is accompanied by his brothers, who then ask the same in return from him. Many, however, have slaves who have to do the carrying. The Victoria Falls are considered by the natives to be the best trading area. Often they bring the cheap cloth they get there further north to the Toka, in order to exchange it for cheap grain, making at least 100 per cent profit.¹³⁷

The intensification of long-distance trade had a specially important effect on the production of, and trade in, metalwork. In the early 1850's some Tonga refused to sell ivory or slaves to Hambari for cloth, but they sold both when the Hambari returned with iron hoes bought in the country north of Sesheke. Thus Livingstone suggested that Sekeletu could prevent Hambari slave raids among the Tonga by supplying the latter with hoes himself, in return for ivory; the suggestion was adopted and apparently met with success.¹³⁸ Bemba chiefs paid their iron-workers in imported cloth.¹³⁹ Iron was much in demand for making spears with which to hunt for elephant and slaves. Indeed, there is evidence that in parts of central and eastern Africa iron spears, and even iron tools, did not become very common until the second half of the nineteenth century: African iron-working may often have been a more important factor than firearms in the political upheavals of the period. Guns were seldom very reliable, and in any case they needed ammunition; in the absence of lead, bullets were sometimes made of copper, as by the Kaonde at Kansanshi.¹⁴⁰ [There was also a widespread demand for copper anklets and bracelets; the general expansion of trade enabled an increasing number of prominent people to obtain such ornaments.¹⁴¹ Several Nyanwezi traders from Katanga were induced to settle in and around Bemba country, where they made fine copper wire, and also ironwork and bark boxes.¹⁴²

Much of this copper came from Katanga, but there is ample evidence in Zambia of the intensive working of copper during the last century and more. Such evidence greatly impressed J.A. Bancroft, the geologist chiefly responsible for the discovery of the ore-bodies now worked on the Copperbelt:

There are numerous examples of the industry of African prospectors of the dim past in their search for copper in Northern Rhodesia. I can testify to their thoroughness; there are very few outcrops containing copper minerals that they did not find and test for the possible production of malachite.¹⁴³

It is in fact likely that the copper deposits accessible to pre-colonial miners had been nrealy exhausted by 1900. At all events, the first European prospectors found many large abandoned copper workings. There were a great number of workings between Lumbwa and the Hook of Kafue, some of them up to forty feet deep and fifty feet wide. At Bwana Likubwa, African miners had worked an open pit that was half a mile long and up to 160 feet deep. But the biggest group of early workings was at Kansanshi, where by 1900 malachite had been dug out over an area five miles across.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the deposit of salt on these workings, and the presence in local clay of oxidized copper from untreated ore, indicate that mining had been practised in the Kansanshi area for several centuries.¹⁴⁵ Now that Kansanshi is once again being exploited, and older workings there are being obliterated, it is appropriate to stress that Zambia's industrial and commercial history may be traced back to long before the arrival of steam power and electricity.

NOTES

See African Social Research, 10, December 1970

Page 737. *dd*

*don't ask such
questions to the
Professor you
stupid chap.*