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# TOWARDS A HISTORY OF IDEAS IN ZAMBIA

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The growth of a country and the direction of its intellectual life must remain in the hands of the nations of that country.<sup>1</sup>

Mwana wa Mchewa amalimba pa mpani wace. (A Chewa child is strong when defending what he own)<sup>2</sup>

Unless something is urgently done, posterity will perhaps blame us for not salvaging our intellectual heritage.<sup>3</sup>

## **Introduction**

The background to this discussion is a reflection of continuities on some historical processes before and after Zambia's political independence. Rural-to-urban migration intensified after independence in October 1964. On the other side of this experience, forced repatriation of Africans from urban to rural areas during the colonial period continued after 1974 as a 'Go Back To The Land' campaign.<sup>4</sup> In another context, Zambia's official agricultural policy from 1964 to the mid-1970s resembled that of the colonial administration in its neglect of rural areas.<sup>5</sup> Another striking feature is how the country's first development plan adopted in 1947 initially focused on rural areas but in 1951 the emphasis was shifted to urban development. All post-colonial development plans had a similar end.<sup>6</sup> One possible explanation that could be postulated for these trends is that there is a continuity at the level of ideas emanating from a social strata with similar assumptions on socio-economic change. It is this postulate that is being explored here in order to trace ways in which intellectual ideas developed and evolved in Zambia and their continuing implications on the society as a whole. A history of ideas in Zambia is an area of scholarship lacking systematic discussion. Yet, as it has already been implied, its substance may have significant imprints on contemporary Zambia. The focus of discussion here is in contrast to those studies on the subject that have been concerned with colonial imprints on post-colonial African political thought.<sup>7</sup> These studies deal with how African imitated European ideas in an authoritarian colonial context. They are not concerned with, and in fact tend to de-emphasise, the African origin and perspective on which European ideas were imposed. African intellectual history has also been raised in terms of the comments from African leaders of thought such as E.W. Blyden and Africans Horton on essentially European phenomena that affected Africa. A study of intellectual ideas in Africa started off with a focus on European perceptions and attitudes about Africa. The sequel was, naturally, a study of

African responses to European enterprise in Africa.<sup>8</sup> This Africanist perspective has produced diverse and critical literature.<sup>9</sup> Leading African historians have called for a refinement of this Africanist perspective. For example, J.F. Ade Ajayi has pointed out that it is necessary that scholarly effort be directed to enduring aspects of African ideas, ideals, virtues and values instead of continuing with negative portraits of intruders into Africa.<sup>10</sup> It is in this general spirit that a sympathetic reconstruction of certain trends of ideas based on Zambian historical experience may further signpost the route pointed out by Ajayi. Thus, the concern of this discussion is of broad interest in African studies of which Zambia is a part. This should also enhance re-evaluation of tendencies among the first generation of African post-colonial leaders to promote monolithic ideas as national philosophies or ideologies. There are imponderable difficulties in the task at hand. One of those is that this discussion is not an exploration of specific projects undertaken before and after Zambia's independence as a basis for unravelling basic ideas behind them. The discussion attempts to trace the nature of African ideas from African sources which are sufficiently broad and empirically rich in the context of forms of indigenous expression or institutions and the interaction of these with those that emerged in the course of a crossfusion between an indigenous intellectual environment and the colonial interlude. In light of such problems, the substance of discussion deserves to be clearly defined. A history of ideas is taken here as a concern with a selected range of human expressions in the form of speech, consistent action and recourse to indigenous tradition as heritage that is continuously in transformation. These experiences cannot be in fixed form because intellectual heritage changes according to dictates of particular historical imperatives. In many respects, this is a preliminary effort on Zambia. This preliminary nature of the study is not a major limitation because intellectual history is a fluid area of scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Zambian Intellectual Context**

There are two levels at which intellectual history should be reconstructed. The first one should deal with the introduction and growth of western system of education. The second level is a concern for recognition of expressions of thought in varied forms in a setting totally different from which western formal education developed and the form it took in limiting and also refining the authoritarian elements in the socio-cultural transformation through western education and colonial capitalism. In Zambia, as in many parts of Africa, what exists on the development of western education is essentially a chronicle of missionary effort; its subsequent adoption by colonial administrations as an important area of expenditure for public funds. Western education involved imparting literary skills of reading and writing and the application of these skills to socio-economic, political and technical changes. Some schools were built in order to win favour

from indigenous rulers for permission to undertake the business of propagating their particular faith.

There were three important aspects in this development.<sup>12</sup> First, the various missionary groups dominated the provision of schools from the 1880s at primary level without attracting government attention in terms of funding or policy until late 1920s. The second aspect was that of allowing increasing government involvement in education from the late 1930s, and in the wake of a growing economy based on the mining industry, a foundation for secondary education was laid during the 1940s. Secondary education was expanded in scale and variety during the last decade of colonial rule. Both government involvement in education and the growth of secondary education underlined contradictions of the colonial political economy. The colonial regime could not, for ever, ignore this important area of social policy in the face of a widening economy. It was also a structural consequence of the policy of indirect rule that an indigenous cadre of functionaries be established both as a philosophical commitment to the policy of indirect rule and an economic imperative to reduce the cost of colonial rule which relied on a costly British civil service and expatriate staff. In the long run, these educated elites were chastised because of welfare associations which they formed as pressure groups for improvement and they were maligned as nationalists from the late 1940s to the 1960s.

The third and well documented aspect of intellectual history in Zambia was the role of non-Zambian Africans. This is particularly illustrated in the colonising process that affected the northern and eastern parts of the country.<sup>13</sup> The missionarisation of the country from the southern and western directions did not use non-Zambian Africans as much as those missionary agents that sprang from Malawi to enter Zambia through the Eastern and Northern provinces. The reasons for this was unclear, but also outside the scope of this presentation. However it is important to note that the Malawian element eventually became ubiquitous in the social, missionary and administrative services of the whole country. David Kaunda is the most documented case, and his episode the most enduring and towering success in Zambia. The Kaunda legacy is one of an expanding dynasty from humble missionary service at the turn of the century and the founding of the first proto-nationalist organisation to the first presidency of post-colonial Zambia.<sup>14</sup> When Zambian intellectual history is approached as a study of the institutional development of western education, much of the colonial period deals with the role of non-Zambian intellectuals. This is how John Cook and Robert Rotberg have approached African contribution to the growth of western education in the country and in charting the rule of educated elites in nationalism.<sup>15</sup> It could also be urged that in so far as educated Malawians' professional experience was shaped by the Zambian indigenous environment, and that they were an African background from which a local community of

educated elites emerged, they should be treated as part of Zambia's intellectual history. Malawians were intellectual pilgrims of Central and Southern Africa and left a distinguished record in many fields. Because this is widely documented, it is not a crucial part of the present study. Moreover, even the Zambian version of the process that produced Malawian educated elites cannot be a significant contribution to a history of ideas in Zambia.

Yet caution is needed so that the baby is not thrown away with the water. An examination of the history of education in its written and reading form is necessary as a way of scanning the medium in which ideas have been preserved. This is also consistent with conventional wisdom of associating intellectual history with documentation. However, writing and reading are not the only elements which fix ideas and made them available to posterity for reflection and transmission to succeeding generations.<sup>16</sup> However, they cannot be ignored because they could be used to trace typically African experience, mode of thought and style of expression that largely survived in written form. These written forms of intellectual ideas also contain African thought articulated through oral traditions and wise sayings. In working towards these goals, our focus will be on intellectual experiences of two Zambians in contrasting geographically peripheral environments of colonial Zambia. They offer fascinating data for examining African mode of thought, its expression and ideas that have been passed to us through written documents. There is no systematic discussion of ideas behind their actions achievements. They illustrate indigenous forms of intellectual expression. The first one we shall consider is Bwembya Paul Mushindo who was born towards the end of the last century and was tragically killed by a car in 1972. The second one was Yuyi W. Mupatu. He was also born at the end of the last century in Bulozhi and died in 1982.<sup>17</sup>

### **Forms of Zambian Intellectual History**

Mushindo enrolled in a school in 1906 and in 1910 he completed a two-year teachers' course. After teaching for a number of years he returned to school in 1920 and completed Standard VI (equivalent to Grade VII) in 1921. He passed Std. VI with a first class. But that was in Northern Rhodesia where the Livingstonia Mission's education system was not as firmly established as in Malawi. As far as white missionaries were concerned, that outstanding performance in Std VI was only a demonstration of potential for scholarship. He needed confirmation of his scholarstic ability. He was sent to a Livingstonia Mission school in Malawi to repeat the two upper primary school classes. He fixed his strength at the level of ideas in overcoming the physical hazards of the journey from Zambia to Malawi. This was a nine-day long and arduous journey through thick forests infested with lions and other dangerous beasts. Mushindo was not cowed. He later recollected that 'it took nine days each way but I did not

worry because I believed in God, my Creator'.<sup>18</sup> He eventually completed Std V and Std VI respectively in 1923 and 1924. After completing another teachers' course in 1926, he returned to Lubwa to replace David Kaunda as teacher and headmaster when Kaunda was sent to attend a theology course in Malawi. Mushindo later taught in a Baptist Mission School in Ndola from 1930 to February 1931. He was recalled to Lubwa either to continue teaching or to work on a translation of the Bible from English to Bemba. Mushindo chose the latter despite the fact that the former job was better paying. He interrupted translation work from 1934 to 1936 when he worked as a research assistant for Audrey Richards. Translation of the Bible was completed in 1955 and there after he worked as a pastor. It was a life rich in diversity of experiences.

Mushindo undertook intellectually challenging tasks with zeal and determination. Translation of the Bible is a kind of intellectual activity associated with institutions of high learning and individuals with distinguished scholarly achievements. On the occasion of installing Kenneth David Kaunda as Chacellor of the University of Zambia, eminent scholars broached the issue of intellectualims in Africa. They underlined the relationship between institutions of higher learning and the advancement of ideas. These distinguished Africans potrayed interest in intellectual ideas as if it was a preserve of university teachers and the brightest university students.<sup>19</sup> In a different context, contrasting perspectives on direction of change in independent Tanzania arrogates intellectualism to institutions of university status.<sup>20</sup> In similar spirit, a discussion of Zambia's first professor and vice-chancellor was 'an appreciation of his work in his efforts to develop the University of Zambia, to give it intellectual depth and mould it into a scholarly institution of intellectual leadership and academic distinction'.<sup>21</sup> Intellectual depth and academic distinction are required of a university. Intellectual leadership is shared with social groups outside, and at times, without any relation with a university. This is especially the case because an intellectual is one who should be aware of and respect world current of opinions and moral thought while making a distinctive contribution to the development of ideas and their mode of expression.

These are characteristics of Mushindo's scholarly and practical work. Translation of the Bible from English to Bemba shows a commitment to production of social knowledge. It singles out Mushindo as a source of and a contribution to intellectual history in Zambia. His return to Lubwa in February 1931 provoked a debate about whether he should devote full time work to teaching or translation of the Bible.

The local church elders and teachers wanted him to be a teacher in place of David Kaunda. Mushindo recognised the financial advantage in teaching but opted for translating the Bible because it offered an opportunity to offer a broad and more lasting service to many people. Through this project he developed skills

and confidence that enabled him to write several books in Bemba. He argued that 'it will be a greater gain to the pure Bemba and the Bemba-speaking people and to those who pretend to understand the Bible in English but do not really understand what it says. They will love God and others'. He was also concerned about the future when he noted that 'Besides this, all pure Bemba who know the Bemba religious words will pass away to eternity'<sup>22</sup> Mushindo projected a social consciousness that was rooted in a rich Bemba cultural heritage. He was aware of cross fertilisation of ideas and cultures through past Bemba interaction with their neighbours and that this process would continue to be refined and broadened. This link in time perspective is an important reflection on change.

This was an unusual expression of a broad African viewpoint and consciousness in the early 1930s. This was vague among Mushindo's contemporary and better educated compatriots. In a discussion of activities of educated elites in the 1920s and 1930s and their welfare or improvement associations, Henry Meebelo has criticised them as bad leaders who did not represent the emerging African working class.<sup>23</sup> These people strongly articulated their constraints under colonialism and in the context of an urban environment. This background subsequently shaped the nature of the nationalist movement and its perspective on development following the end of colonial rule. Mushindo did not have this narrow perspective. He strongly held the view that a Bible written in Bemba would help not only the pure Bemba but also all Bemba speaking people. He used his first language and the Bible as a medium through which to develop a local perspective that was diverse and dynamic. As if by Mushindo's design, from the 1930s, Bemba became more widely spoken in the country than any indigenous language. Moreover, Mushindo made a case for linking English and Bemba, the two languages which later came to dominate his country of birth. In this respect, the depth and breadth of the consequences of Mushindo's ideas and actions are an important anchor of a historical study of ideas in Zambia.

Mushindo was keenly aware of his cultural heritage as a springboard. Macpherson has reported that 'Mushindo was widely known as a passionate guardian of *Ichimbemba inkonto*, the pure Bemba speech of his forefathers'. This is an important aspect of a history of ideas. Reasoning power uses one's learning and experience in a particular cultural heritage as a spring-board for dealing with other civilisations. For many past centuries translations of the Bible has been undertaken by men of learning who demonstrated intellectual leadership. Mushindo has a rightful claim to be a man of letters despite his humble western education. But it is not necessary that western education gave him credibility. He demonstrated his intellectual growth from a perspective of his cultural heritage on the Bible, an instrument which was extremely influential in spreading a very

broad form of western education and culture. He used it to rekindle local religious faculties and orientations.

In making this point, it should be recognised that the ambiguities of the missionary enterprise in Africa are widely documented. It also could therefore, be a false praise to single out an African christian, a pastor, as a source of constructing intellectual history of Zambia. Mushindo had a perspective that transcended christianity. He was aware that European barbarism had sipped into and became ingrained in biblical practices and doctrines. His case was that christianity had to adapt to African culture and civilisation. Mushindo rejected the use of the Bible and christianity for mental and cultural colonisation and domination of Africans. He actively retained his indogenous name in the face of strict impositions from his adopted religion. He maintained active contacts with his cultural roots. He remained immensely proud of his people's history and culture.

In the course of pursuing his teaching profession and translating the Bible he wrote eight books in Bemba and on Bemba history from the 1920s to the early 1970s. He worked to give Zambia a bible in a local language which also developed a written history. He rejected opinions that African cultural beliefs made Africans unfit for christianity. He argued that Africans did not have to renounce their cultural roots in order to be christians. He gave a disarming response to a Roman Catholic priest who deided the Bemba for believing in *Ifiwa* (evil spirits) haunting the earth. Mushindo responded that 'all christians believe that Jesus Christ when he lived in Palestine he was casting out devils from many people; so no good christian should pretend to be what he is not. Truth and honesty are the best policy to all of us'.<sup>25</sup> It was clear to this intellectually assertive Zambian that European culture had arrogated to itself a false mission of spreading civilisation through many white intellectual dwarfs. Mushindo was aware of the arrogance of his new religion and its derision of the basis of non-European thought. This contextual trend has not helped Mushindo's many compatriots such as Emmanuel Milingo who has been exiled from his country of birth for certain positions similar to those of Mushindo.<sup>26</sup> It is such conflicting African experiences that recall the essence of the third of our opening quotations that we should guard against blame from posterity through salvaging our intellectual heritage.

In Mushindo, we see an intellectual development spanning much of the colonial period and which was influenced by Christianity, colonialism and his deep roots in Bemba culture, history and intellectual heritage. He had a deep sense of philosophical appreciation combined with perceptive humour which was couched in devastating comments on European pretensions of racial and intellectual superiority. He once observed at a white dominated dinner at Stewart Gore Browne's Shiba Ng'andu home that 'if people who love God and believe in



him die, then all of them shall meet together before God and surround the throne of God because he loves them all'.<sup>27</sup> The comment stung and shocked the white audience whose image of life in heaven was that it would be a transfer of racially segregated life of Northern Rhodesia. This subjective view, for sure nurtured by particular historical conditions, did not equal Mushindo's analytical depth and intellectual perceptiveness. He had original and insightful articulation of thought. From the background of his cultural heritage he was more subtle than other leaders of African thought on the diverse interaction of African and European experiences. For example, celebrities of African thought such as Africanus Horton and Blyden spoke highly of African civilisation but felt that European civilisation had to be the direction towards which Africa needed to grow.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Mushindo was clear that there would be no 'true friendship between a white man and a blackman'.<sup>29</sup> This is as faulty a generalisation as it is valid and honest.

Mushindo is an important source of Zambian intellectual history because of his scholarly output and a broad range of activities in which new ideas were important for change. His experiences were bound to lead him to politics. Like many of his political contemporaries, his political nursery was the Lūbwa Welfare Association. He represented Chinsali district on the Northern Province Representative Council and was later a delegate for Northern Province in the African Representative Council. Within the context of politics of accommodation that shaped representative politics in colonial Zambia, Mushindo rose to the highest institution of Indirect rule. He was not a stooge of the colonial order. Between 1947 and 1952, he spoke eloquently against racial discrimination and about a false belief in African paramountcy and the viability of the federation project. He saw the creation of the African Representative Council as a significant, albeit controlled, step in the development of representatives among Africans.<sup>30</sup> In 1947 Mushindo told the Secretary for Native Affairs that 'the time is not yet come but we shall rule ourselves in the end'.<sup>31</sup> The idea of eventual African political independence was expressed with unusual confidence and a rather detached involvement.

In the context of colonial Zambia's unevenly developed social and education systems, it was difficult to pull together the cadre of indigenous leaders of thought and innovation. This was the case with Mushindo and Yuyi W. Mupatu. Time is now ripe to pull together Zambian intellectual thought especially in the light of the opening observations in the present discussion and ideas of political leaders that have been crystallised into guidelines for conformity since the country attained political independence in 1964. It is fair to suggest other forms of thought and experiences with a bearing on Zambia's historical and current achievements. The intellectual perspective of Yuyi W. Mupatu developed in a different socio-economic context from that which affected

Mushindo. He completed standard V in 1910 and worked as an interpreter, an induna at the Lozi royal courtyard, as a teacher from 1911 to the 1960s. He also tried a hand at business by running a store. He finally started a school in 1945 which he handed over to the the Zambian government in 1966. The sad aspect of the take-over and renaming the school in honour of Mupatu was that it was transferred as a structure of buildings without the spirit and ideas on which Mupatu had started it. This alone justifies Mupatu as part of Zambia's intellectual heritage. Like many people of ideas, Mushindo and Mupatu travelled widely and studied within and outside their motherland. Metaphorically, they also extensively explored their original culture and its growth in a wider colonial setting.

Each of Mupatu's careers reveals that he was a pioneer, a man of ideas and an innovator. He first taught at the Barotse National School from 1915 to 1928. He was dismissed because a new headmaster did not allow any of his teachers to cover learning activities beyond a prescribed government syllabus. Mupatu told posterity that the new headmaster 'discouraged teaching many aspects of arithmetic, geometry or any algebra. He discouraged teaching of English in the way it was taught previously. He insisted on following the government syllabus which did not demand the high level we had'. The cause of the change was that 'Barotseland has attained higher education than the rest of Northern Rhodesia. Therefore, they must wait for the other schools in the territory'.<sup>32</sup> A headmaster who should be a leader of men nurturing ideas, embarked on a project of lowering the quality of education of an institution because of excellence the same institution had attained. A contradiction could not be as blatant and painful. Mupatu decided that he would not be a party to it. At about the time Mupatu was dismissed from the BNS, the Acting Director of African education reported to the Secretary of Native Affairs in the Northern Rhodesia government that the country had few teachers coming from Malawi.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, and in response to advice from the Phelps Stokes Commission for active government involvement in African education, the department for African education withheld recognition of many mission run schools because of low quality of education they provided.<sup>34</sup> Mupatu's headmaster was orienting the BNS to a programme of low quality of Education. Mupatu held the view that the Barotse National School faced a challenging situation and called for the School's leadership. It could now be added that the best course would have been to turn the Barotse National School into a substitute for Livingstonia as source of teachers for the country. An attitude of hostility against non-Zambian Africans for the teaching profession was strong as Chitambo mission from the late 1920s and in the 1930s — partly because of declining quality in education.<sup>35</sup>

Mupatu was firm against mediocrity. Latham had re-assigned Mupatu to another school in Bulozzi which was a satellite of the Barotse National School and

supervised by the headmaster of the BNS. Mupatu did not accept the new assignment. Mupatu also refused to take up a better paying teaching position in Botswana which Latham had arranged. He preferred to teach under Rev. Ray Lawyer at the Church of Christ School in the Gwembe valley of Southern Province. The Botswana position which he turned down would have paid £8 a month compared to £3 at Kabanga Mission School in the Gwembe valley. This was about the same time that Mushindo opted for a less remunerative job of working with MacMinn in translating the Bible. Another coincidence in their lives is that this was also the time that they published their first vernacular books: *Imilumbe ne nshimi (Proverbs and Folk Tales)* for Mushindo and *Chipeleta che Tonga* for Mupatu. It is the coincidence in their articulation of ideas that is impressive. The intellectual integrity of Mupatu and Mushindo lay in their academic record and rejecting monetary reward as an over-riding consideration in their professions. Their legacy cannot be more poignant to Zambia in the 1980s where and when political and economic factors have forced many people with high academic qualifications and achievement to leave their country.

In 1933 Mupatu returned to Buluzi to start a trading business. He was chided by the Lozi indunas for thinking of this project. They told him that trading was a whiteman's activity which none of the Lozi councillors and aristocrats had tried. They did not expect a Lozi commoner even to think of it. One of the councillors remarked

You were a teacher at Barotse National School but you were dismissed. For many years you were not in the country; you were teaching at Kabanga Mission, Church of Christ. I suspect when you came home, you might have been fired there also. Perhaps that is why you dream of the impossible to be possible.<sup>36</sup>

Induna Muyumbana repeated the point for emphasis and clarity. He told Mupatu 'You have made a great mistake in wasting our time. I don't see why the Nyambela has to waste time with your far fetched ideas'.<sup>37</sup> Mushindo was considered to have political ideas which were a 'dream of the impossible to be possible'; and to be 'far fetched'. Mupatu was resolute. His directness of utterance corresponds to that of Mushindo. Mupatu's pointed and prophetic reply was

Although you do not believe me, the fact remains that in the near future you shall see your people selling goods just as white people do. Some will be farmers, butchers, carpenters, teachers, preachers, clerks, authors and authoresses on their own.<sup>38</sup>

As discussed earlier, Mushindo was equally stubborn and eloquent in expressing

his ideas and predictions. It would be a tedious catalogue to detail developments from 1964 in Zambia as validation of their ideas. What deserves mention is that these ideas were collectively shared with the social strata that influenced their perspectives. History has made their observations to be self-evident. And more important for the present study, a chronicle of educational developments in Zambia, as noted earlier, or accounts of business development in Zambia as Beveridge and Obserchall have done need to be transcended.<sup>39</sup> It is important now to explore ideas behind socio-economic undertakings of the African population especially because ideas have proved to be elusive among the first generation of post-colonial African leaders. This effort is well advanced on how African peasants and workers relied on collective ideas in using their precolonial experiences to adapt to colonialism and capitalism. It has been further documented that peasants and workers had clear and specific perspectives in their relation to mainstream Zambian nationalism.<sup>40</sup> Yet the facets of varied Zambian social strata can be scanned in the ideas and experiences of Mupatu and Mushindo.

### **A Critique**

Innovation and endurance characterised the actions, expressions and thoughts of Mupatu and Mushindo. Yuyi Mupatu strongly believed 'nothing venture, nothing gained'.<sup>41</sup> This belief in ideas is important in estimating the viability of any venture. Mupatu demonstrated it practically in locating the store on Luyi river in the Southern Part of Bulozhi with easy access to wholesale merchants in Livingstone and on a labour migration route where returning labour migrants provided a captive market. Unfortunately the store had a sad and early demise. For reasons that still remain unknown, it was robbed and set on fire. There are times that destruction of certain physical presentation of ideas is not a major set back because people rely on ideas for any pioneering work and against physical hazards. Mupatu's response was that 'whenever we fall into troubles, we must not be discouraged. Troubles make men conscious of many things and how best one must tackle them. Life enjoyed without troubles is useless'.<sup>42</sup> Mupatu may have been addressing his compatriot, Mushindo, who faced incessant abuse from MacMinn.

Such a range, depth and subtlety in ideas hardly exists in standard accounts we earlier referred to on the Nyasa intellectual diaspora into Zambia and other parts of Southern Africa. Even the colonial Zambian educated elites are presented simply as a social, political and intellectual influence withhold detailed discussion of the bedrock of ideas which they articulated in a range of experiences. Mupatu and Mushindo questioned the relevance of non-Zambian and European experiences to their local environment. Relevance was important in Mushindo's and Mupatu's activities. While Horton would argue their African society needed

to shape itself to fit British civilisation, Mushindo and Mupatu wanted christianity, colonial education, colonialism and the colonising society to make themselves relevant to local conditions. In 1942 when Mupatu returned to the Barotse National school, he was demoted in favour of a Malawian teacher. In 1943, he was eventually sacked for leading a protest against the Malawian who was part of a trend to lower teaching standards at the school. Contemporary and recent commentators confirm a trend in the lowering of educational standards at the Barotse National School and other schools in the country.<sup>43</sup> Colonial educationists expressed serious concern from the late 1920s to the late 1930s on the quality of education.<sup>44</sup> When the mining industry first considered whether or not to be involved in educational matters as part of labour stabilisation between 1938 and 1942, they drew attention to low standards in African education.<sup>45</sup> This was one cause for the companies' decision not to allow government and mission schools in mine compounds.

This policy was revised in 1942 because it had appeared like objecting to the provision of education to Africans at a time when there was a clear policy in support of European education.<sup>46</sup> Over a decade later the mining industry reported that 'the companies had not yet formulated any policy in regard to this and other aspects of African education which they regard as part of the main problem of urbanisation and stabilisation of labour'.<sup>47</sup> As late as 1954, the mining industry reiterated its view on government's inability to provide adequate schools and a quality of education appropriate for the Zambian economy. The industry decided to make a contribution to education above Standard II (grade IV) by supporting boarding schools in rural areas.<sup>48</sup> So overwhelming was the evidence on which Mupatu felt not to be frustrated. There is a general consciousness in their commitment to service and welfare for others. Mushindo said of his work on the Bible that 'I chose to help other people, my tribe and its sister tribes, by ensuring that the Bible be translated into Bemba which would help many people to know what God's will was, to understand clearly what humanism means and many other things revealed in the Bible. This is more important than gaining money'.<sup>49</sup> The commitment to producing social knowledge is clear here. The same inspiration is found in Mupatu. After a brief interlude in trading, Mupatu responded to his vocational calling because of the historical circumstances of his immediate environment to colonial Zambia. He was worried about a large number of young boys and girls who could neither enroll in school nor further their education after elementary school. He saw them quickly turn to ruinous social habits such as stealing, uncontrolled beer drinking and pre-mature marital relations.

The more disturbing aspect was that limited literary skills they acquired did not fit them into the colonial economy. They had become uprooted from indigenous economic activities such as mat-making. This is a point recently

analysed in a study of underdevelopment in Buluzi. That study focused on the narrow scope and poor quality of education that was provided at the Barotse National School. One of the disturbing things about Mupatu's school project is that not many such initiatives are known or documented. In a recent essay competition organised by the Historical Association of Zambia, Tamala Mwale, a secondary school student, examined a similar initiative in Eastern Province.<sup>50</sup>

In August 1945 Mupatu started a primary school which he also financed from proceeds of his second shop until 1966 when the Zambian government took over the school. The school suffered two setbacks between 1945 and 1966. Barely four years after its opening, Mupatu was appointed an Induna and the school almost closed. R.B. Muteto volunteered to serve the school from closing. Samalambo run the school from 1950 when Muteto was also appointed Induna. In 1956, Mupatu had to resign from Indunaship in order to improve the running of the school and because of a growing enrollment. The second setback was when the Lozi Indunas reserved a government decision in 1954 to aid the school. Mupatu was undeterred. A spur came in 1963 from the Principal of the Jeanes at Mazabuka. Rev. J.R. Fell released funds to the school and commented to Mupatu that '(But) we may be in real danger of vastly overestimating the value of European efforts in Native Education and sadly underestimating the work of Native efforts in the same course'.<sup>51</sup> Mupatu inspired some of his contemporaries through his efforts, ideas and commitment to a vision. Mupatu, his Makapulwa School and his ideas travelled a long and hard journey. Firstly, through decisions of Rev. Fell and the President of Zambia the school survived as a legacy of Mupatu's intellectual contribution to his nation. The pity is that from the 1960s to the 1980s, many schools have been built by local communities through the Self-Help Strategy but the legacy of Mupatu is hardly consulted or acknowledged. Unlike many schools built since 1964, Mupatu, the pupils and local community contributed to Makapulwa school. This practice was ignored in the 1960s and 1970s but has become common in the 1980s.

From a different perspective, historians have paid tribute to men of ideas, the intellectuals of colonial Zambia. Of Mushindo, and valid also for Mupatu, J. van Velsen wrote that 'regretably, the role of individuals who have played their part in Zambia's more recent part and have helped to create this nation in its varied aspects, with its current institutions, has not received the attention it deserves'.<sup>52</sup> G. Prins said of Mupatu's autobiography that 'there is everything for everyone' in it. He elaborated that a political scientist, an anthropologist, an economic historian and a social historian would see Mupatu as a multi-discipline. Both theoretically and empirically oriented scholars would see Mupatu as a source of interdisciplinary scholarship. Rev. Macpherson has presented Mushindo in the same way. Mupatu and Mushindo have also been presented as historians par excellence.<sup>53</sup> This is based on, partly, *Buluzi Sapili* by Mupatu and *A Short History*

of the Bemba by Mushindo. Prins wrote of Mupatu that 'when a hoe has been lost in the water for a long time, the person who retrieves it is most skilful'.<sup>54</sup> A tribute to Mushindo was and would be no less. Much has been said about their social, cultural, historical and political contributions. What has not been systematically discussed and recognised is their contribution to a pool of ideas that have unending influence in Zambia, yet they have not been systematically passed on to contemporary scholars and general public.

This discussion has dealt with ideas behind their experiences and presented them as a source of a new historical reconstruction. Mupatu and Mushindo have been presented as a source of ideas in three ways. First, their lives span the colonial and post-colonial eras, covering a period of about eighty years. A source that covers three generations and is diverse in experiences it contains is an important one in any discipline in the social sciences and humanities. They are part of the first generation of Zambian intellectuals able to combine literary and orature as ways to express ideas. They are important to them because 'the first cow drinks good water'. Therefore, they are fertile sources of intellectual history as well as being historians of ideas. Their life experiences present a first hand account of expressions of a typically African setting.

Secondly, they were social actors who linked thought, practice and action. They are sources of intellectual history because of what they wrote, their ideals, achievement and effort. They left written reflections of concerns over three generations. For scholars specialised in orature, Mushindo and Mupatu have recorded and left behind insightful perspectives and set off a search for proverbs as a basis of restructuring the intellectual heritage of Zambia. Piecemeal effort in this direction exists. For example, Nyambe Sumbwa has suggested the use of proverbs in teaching African history.<sup>55</sup> He suggests that students would deduce various socio-economic and political activities of defined societies from the literal and veiled meanings of proverbs. The wider meaning of the proverbs could also be probed. In this way, the teaching of history could also be based on local ideas and cultural expression. This would be a significant step in indigenising African education and improving its relevance to the local environment. As a proverbial intellectual expression points out, 'he who eats his own food is a farmer'.<sup>56</sup> Such proverbs would range over many cultural traditions, and as another scholar of orature has argued, proverbs and related literature would broaden cultural appreciation, diversity and common identity.<sup>57</sup> The intellectual content of such literature would be important to study.

Indeed, proverbs and related forms of African literature, are important intellectual expressions and also sources of intellectual history in Zambia. Mupatu and Mushindo recognised this in their accounts. More than this recognition, they were aware of difficulties in projecting African experience and views especially in the form of proverbs which were associated with the African

past. In the Zambian context, they were pioneers of orature as a new discipline in African Studies.<sup>58</sup> What Mupatu said of himself, would be said of Mushindo, and also apply to oral traditions, proverbs as intellectual history. He instructively observed that 'a young of a lechew learns life's problems while still young; our destination in life is long'.<sup>59</sup> Indigenous scholarship in Zambia is still young and its destination is yet undefined. It is hoped that the present discussion is a contribution to that growth and a search for destination. Caution is needed so that we do not search a destination when origin is unclear. This would happen if Zambian proverbs, folklore, popular culture and songs are for ever not collected for critical probing. The danger is serious because of equivalence in proverbs found in African indigenous languages and the European colonising languages, for example, in the English language, its proverbial mode of thought and expression could seriously blur the origin and destination of Zambian intellectual history and scholarship. This could best be illustrated by an English saying that 'silence means consent'. In most Zambian communities a discussant would be prevailed upon to verbalise a 'silent' opinion. A misunderstanding and misinterpretation occurred in 1927 among the Tona. Chief Mwanachingwala was silent when a District Commissioner persistently instructed him at a meeting to move his people from crown land into an African reserve. The District Commissioner took the chief's silence to mean '*wasumina*' (you have agreed).<sup>60</sup> Yet, through silence the chief expressed the strongest form of rejection by showing that his people's right to land was not negotiable.

The intellectual history charted here relates to a number of specific social situations and are class related. This is important to consider the social class in which these ideas were shaped and the class for which Mupatu and Mushindo spoke. First, they both worked in low ranks of their professions as Subordinate staff. They worked hard for long hours. They were exploited as workers. As earlier noted, a recent reinterpretation of Zambian labour history as referred to men like Mupatu and Mushindo as an intellegentsia which was part of an early African working class. They were subordinate staff in perpetual junior positions and were paid low wages, discriminated and were poorly housed. From this perspective, we can take their ideas as an articulation of the views of a working class. They also exercised their influence as intellectuals far beyond the colonial administration to which they addressed their grievances. Antonio Gramsci interpreted intellectuals as a social stratum which exercised influence on reproduction of cultural life, and a particular political system.<sup>61</sup> The intellectual is also aware of its own function and origin in the genesis of economic production. Intellectuals are men whose socio-cultural positions are highly regarded. They exert influences towards particular goals and aspirations. In this context, many early educated elites viewed themselves as superior to their cultural background because their origin was a (new) political economy of colonialism. This cannot be



said of the ideas and actions that make the focus of this discussion. Our sources were outstanding monuments of Zambian intellectual history. They eloquently expressed bitterness against offences to their people and culture. This they did while remaining passionately proud and romantic about their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Mushindo and Mupatu may have been ambivalent. They were unflinching in their christian beliefs despite much suffering at the hands of their white *brothers*. It was clear to both of them that barriers between people of different colours would not disappear and that it was false consciousness to attribute superior achievements only to civilisations of colonialism. They developed a diverse social consciousness. They asserted the pride of their culture as a collective identity. In this way they negated colonial culture of domination. This contrasts with T.O. Ranger's fascination with how colonial monarchical rituals were presented to Zambians in the 1920s and 1930s to the extent of the acquiesced colonial culture.<sup>62</sup> A further contrast is Mushindos subtle observations of King George IV's visit to Northern Rhodesia in 1947.<sup>63</sup> He shows that African chiefs refused to be treated the way the colonial administrators wanted. Mushindo's view of monarchical rituals points to a different experience and origin to that of Ranger. Moreover, Mushindo was there in 1947; Ranger did not actually witness the events of the 1920s and 1930s which he discussed.

Mupatu and Mushindo rooted African feeling and rejection of colonial rule in their cultural heritage. In doing so, they were not conservative. They integrated their concrete experiences into discourse of wide nature and effect on Zambia. They were innovators because they tried to weave their past into their contemporary conditions with an eye on the future. Evidence for this is in Mushindos Bible project and his incisive political comments from the late 1940s. Mupatu persisted with three ventures: teaching, trading and the self-help Makapulwa school. Their social and intellectual ambivalence makes them holistic. Scholars of a history of ideas recognise that the field is compositive and penetrates borders of many disciplines. The experiences, expressions, forms of expressions of intellectual ideas traced here reflected diversity and fluidity characteristic of intellectual history.

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**Notes**

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